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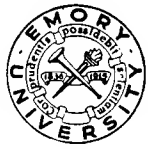

PRESENTED

IN MEMORY OF

Allen P Tankersley

BY

Mr. and Mrs J W. Tankersley

U. S. Grant

CAMPAIGNS

OF THE

ARMY OF THE POTOMAC

A CRITICAL HISTORY OF OPERATIONS IN VIRGINIA MARYLAND AND PENNSYLVANIA FROM THE COMMENCEMENT TO THE CLOSE OF THE WAR

1861-1865

BY

WILLIAM SWINTON

AUTHOR OF "DECISIVE BATTLES OF THE WAR," "OUTLINES OF THE WORLD'S HISTORY," ETC.

REVISION AND RE-ISSUE

NEW YORK
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From the PRINCE DE JOINVILLE (François d'Orleans).

I firmly believe that your book will live as a true and able record of one of the most gigantic and stubborn military efforts. . For me, whose fortune it was to be associated with the infancy of the Army of the Potomac, and who spent so many happy days in the field with her, I have read with emotion the long account of her deeds, trials, suffering, and final success, so feelingly told; and I thank you for the satisfaction I experienced.

From HON. WM. H. SEWARD.

It is a great subject you undertook in writing the history of the Army of the Potomac. But I knew your ability and candor so well as to feel assured you would treat the great theme as it deserved. In this I have not been disappointed, for I discern the vastly different character of your excellent and judicially considered History from the great mass of ephemeral productions on the subject.

From PROF D. H. MAHAN, late Professor of Engineering at West Point.

Mr. William Swinton, in his work, "Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac," has not only shown himself the worthy Polybius of that army, but has placed himself on a level with our best modern lay military historians.

From HENRY WARD BEECHER.

If any one will know the mechanism and anatomy of battle, let him read our American Napier, William Swinton.

From MAJOR-GENERAL W. S. HANCOCK.

I have read your "History of the Army of the Potomac," and consider it the most valuable addition to the military criticism of the War that has yet appeared in print. By one who has been so long identified with that army as myself it can readily be perceived that you have endeavored to write the truth. I may add that I believe the Army of the Potomac has been fortunate in its historian, and that your array of facts will not hereafter be surpassed in accuracy.

From MAJOR-GENERAL W. B. FRANKLIN.

It tells the story nearly as it is believed to-day by the honest actors in the scenes and incidents which it narrates. It is a matter of astonishment to me that you have been able to make so impartial an account.

From MAJOR-GENERAL D. N. COUCH.

You have put forth a truthful record—a new era in American military writers. "You need not fear what man can do to you."

From JEFFERSON DAVIS.

The fairest and most careful of the Northern writers on the war.

From ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS.

The exciting scenes and stirring events of the battle-fields have been quite graphically described by many writers, but by none so far, as I have seen, with greater ability or more impartiality than by Mr. William Swinton in his two works. . Upon the whole I regard these two works from his pen as the best and most accurate chronicle of the military operations which he undertook to describe that I have met with from any quarter.

NOTE TO THE REISSUE.

THIS history of the defeats and the triumphs of that great army which, for four years, maintained in Virginia the cause of the Union against the chief armed force of Secession was first published in 1866.

Though meeting a favorable reception from most of those best qualified to judge of its deserts, the book, through a mishap of publication, ere long disappeared from "the market," and for more than a decade it has been practically unprocurable. Still there has been all the while a demand for it sufficient to indicate that it was not yet quite ready to go into Time's "wallet for oblivion"; and recently things have so shaped themselves that it is now possible, under favorable circumstances, to make resuscitation of the "Army of the Potomac."

In preparing the book for reissue I have taken occasion to make correction of a considerable number of minor faults of matter and manner, and in the *Appendix* will be found some addenda for which the foot-notes did not afford space.

While engaged in the revision, I have read most of the authoritative works bearing on the history of the Army of the

Potomac which have appeared since 1866. It is no small satisfaction to find many of my conclusions confirmed by historians of greater ability, writing under more favorable opportunities of information and criticism. It was my chief aim (as stated in the Preface) to present "army-verdicts," and it is pleasant to find after sixteen years a very general acquiescence in the justness of these verdicts. And I may add that, had I the "Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac" to make over again, though I hope I should bring to the expression of its judgments more balance and moderation, the judgments themselves would not be materially modified. The picture might differ in coloring; the drawing would remain in its chief lines the same.

W S.

BROOKLYN, October, 1882.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

It is not without diffidence that I give to the world a volume including within its single self the history of events so vast and complicated, so little understood and so greatly misunderstood, as those that filled up the momentous four years during which the chief armies of the North and the South fought the war of secession to an issue upon the soil of Virginia. Yet, I should not have attempted the task, had I not been met both by an inward prompting in the desire to speak truly of actions and men whereof there has been hitherto little else than false witness, and by outward solicitations, in the possession of such a mass of documentary material as it seldom falls to the writer of contemporaneous history to obtain.

While the Army of the Potomac was yet in the field, there were many who, believing that I would in time make fitter record of the doings and sufferings of that army than was possible in the brief chronicles which it was my duty to prepare for the press, began even then to furnish me with oral and written information. And no sooner had the war closed, and it was known that I had ad-

dressed myself to this work in earnest, than, from all sides, reports, dispatches, and memorials poured in upon me. It soon came about that, respecting every important action of the Army of the Potomac, there were brought to my hand, not only the manuscript official reports of its corps, division, and brigade commanders, but, for the illustration of its inner life and history, a prodigious mass of memoirs, private note-books, dispatches, letter-books, etc. In addition, I have had the benefit of the memory and judgment of most of the chief officers; and, both from these and others, have had so many proofs of their kindly solicitude that nothing which could be of use to me should be wanting, that I have been led to believe they did not regard me as entirely unworthy to record the history of their army.

For the elucidation of the deeds of the Army of Northern Virginia, the mighty rival of the Army of the Potomac, my sources of information have been scarcely less ample. These embrace the complete "Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia," and many manuscript reports and documents kindly forwarded to me. I have also had the advantage of full conversations with most of the chief commanders of the Confederate army; and I think the result cannot fail to appear in the explanation of many things hitherto wrongly interpreted, many things hitherto wholly incomprehensible.

I have seldom needed to refer for the corroboration of statements to what I personally saw; and indeed the individual knowledge of any one man respecting such actions as were waged in Virginia, is necessarily slight. But that which has been of such use that without it the history of the Army of the Potomac never could have been written, is the power, gained by personal experience in the field, of

testing the truth of written evidence by a reference to the actual conditions under which warfare was made in Virginia. Nor is it of less value to have known the private judgments upon events of that great body of instructed officers that adorned the Army of the Potomac. As these judgments took shape from the deeds themselves under the very circumstances of their performance, I hold them to be sounder than any that are hereafter likely to be rendered. Hence I have garnered these with care, endeavoring to make this a record of the *army*-verdicts on men and things. It will be safe to presume that whatever is of worth in this book has this origin.

It is probable that the estimates here rendered of the successive commanders of the Army of the Potomac, may in some cases be found to run counter to, and in other cases to be a reversal of, popular estimates. I must say, in justice to myself, that if some commanders are here exalted above the place they have hitherto held in popular esteem, and others brought down to a lower place, it is because I dared not judge one commander by one standard, and another by another. Whatever criticism I have made on men has resulted from the reference of their actions to the test of those simple principles to which almost all great military questions may be reduced. Those, therefore, who would impugn these judgments must in justice first impugn the reasoning on which they are founded.

I desire to call attention to the maps and plans, which, though on a small scale, are entirely reliable. They have been prepared with great care, by Colonel W H. Paine, of the engineer staff of the Army of the Potomac. I particularly instance those illustrative of Grant's campaign from the Rapidan to Petersburg. The

lines of works marked thereon are derived from the government surveys, and the angles indicated are correct. They will prove highly interesting and instructive to military students.

To a distinguished officer I owe a special acknowledgment for the invaluable gift of the unpublished consolidated monthly returns of the Confederate army from the commencement to the close of the war.

The notes in support of the text are made very ample, especially touching all disputed points. As, with a few well-known exceptions, the sources of information are entirely manuscript, it has not been thought necessary to state this fact in each individual case.

W S.

NEW YORK, April, 1866.

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LIEUTENANT-GENERAL U. S. GRANT.

MAJOR-GENERAL G. B. MCCLELLAN. MAJOR-GENERAL A. E. BURNSIDE.

MAJOR-GENERAL J. HOOKER. MAJOR-GENERAL G. G. MEADE.

CAMPAIGNS

OF THE

ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.

I

THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC IN HISTORY.

So soon as the passionate rushing to arms that succeeded the bombardment and fall of Fort Sumter had indicated that a great war was upon the sundered sections of the American Union, it became manifest that Virginia was marked out as the principal theatre of the impending conflict. The tidings of what had happened in the harbor of Charleston found that State assembled at Richmond in high debate on the question of Secession; and then whatever there was in its councils of what men called "Unionism" or conservatism was hushed, and in wild tumult Virginia was voted out of the Union and into the Confederacy.

This, Virginia voted on the 16th of April, 1861; but from her eyes was hid what else she voted—to wit, a war destined to redden all her streams, to desolate her fertile fields, to cut off the flower of her young men, and to leave her at its close prostate and impoverished.

When Virginia linked her destiny with the Confederacy, those who controlled the Secession revolution signified their appreciation of the accession of that ancient and powerful Commonwealth by transferring to her chief city the capital of

the Confederate government; and whereas that government had borne the name "provisional" at Montgomery, at Richmond it assumed to itself the style and title of "permanent." Thus marked out as a seat of war by virtue of being the administrative centre of the insurgent power, Virginia was furthermore marked out as the main seat of war by her geographical relations as a frontier State. For upon her secession the Potomac, her northern boundary, became, for all the region between the Atlantic and the Alleghanies, the dividing line betwixt those "points of mighty opposites," the North and the South,—names which, hitherto of no more than political import, now assumed the new and dread significance of belligerent Powers.

Thus, by her will and by fate, Virginia became the Flanders of the war. And already, from the moment the events in Charleston harbor made war flagrant, armed men, in troops and battalions, hurried forward, from the North and from the South, to her borders. An equal fire animated both sections. President Lincoln called for seventy-five thousand men; Mr. Davis, for a hundred thousand,—armies of a proportion never before seen on the Western continent. Yet such was the spontaneous alacrity with which on each side the summons was obeyed, that within the space of a few weeks, these limits were greatly overpassed, and an additional call for a half million men on the part of the North, and a levy *en masse* on the part of the South, met a like response. Then by that new agent of transportation which has revolutionized military operations no less than the movements of commerce, the volunteers were quickly conveyed to Virginia from points so distant and divergent as to strike the imagination with wonder. It is estimated that for many weeks after the first call for troops, armed men arrived in Richmond, from all parts of the South at the rate of from fifteen hundred to two thousand daily; and the multitude poured forth from the populous North was not less, but greater. From the loyal States, the point of concentration was Washington, where for a time the gathering force held a simply defensive attitude: then bursting the

barrier of the Potomac, it launched itself upon that soil which the men of Virginia fondly named "sacred," and the history of the Army of the Potomac began.

I design in this volume to record, as far as may now be done, what that Army did and suffered in ten campaigns and two-score battles, in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. This history, if adequately made, must be the history also of much the larger part of that gigantic war that, originating in the secession of eleven States from the Federal Union, ended, after four years, in the establishment of that Union on a lasting basis. For though this conflict assumed continental proportions and raged around a circumference of many thousand miles, it was observed that its head and front ever remained in that stretch of territory between the Potomac and the James, and between the Blue Ridge and Chesapeake Bay Here, from the start, each belligerent, as by common consent, concentrated its richest resources; here, throughout the struggle, each continued to sustain its greatest armies, under its ablest commanders: and never for a day did it lose its military primacy in the eyes of either party to the conflict. It is estimated that out of the half million men who met death, and the two million who suffered wound in the war—the losses of both sides, and the casualties of all the battles and sieges over the whole continental field of action, being included—above one-half this appalling aggregate belongs to the Army of the Potomac and its adversary. These losses are the summing up of a series of campaigns and battles as grand in their proportions as any on record, waged with a remorseless energy, wrought out with all the resources that modern art has devised to make war deadly, and fought under peculiar conditions, upon a theatre peculiar in its character. That theatre is Virginia—a colossal canvas whereon moving masses and the forms of wrestling armies appear.

The history of the War for the Union would set forth that majestic exhibition of power by which a free people, without military traditions, created great armies, waged a national

war, and subdued an internal revolt of a magnitude without parallel. The scope of this volume is more restricted, and embraces the story of one alone of these armies, though the main one.

I shall have to trace how this force arose, and its first essays and failures; how it grew into the shape and substance of an army; and how it then entered upon campaigns bloody, indecisive, and protracted.

I shall have to show how this army, losing again and again the component parts of its structure,—thinned by death, and wounds, and wasting disease, and filled up again and again by the unquenched patriotism of the people,—never lost its individual being, but remained the Army of the Potomac still; and I shall have to follow those changing phases that the life of an army, not less than the life of an individual, undergoes.

I shall have to celebrate the unswerving loyalty of this army, that, ofttimes when the bond of military cohesion failed, held it, "unshaked of motion," to a duty self-imposed.

I shall have to follow it through a checkered experience, in a tale commingled of great misfortunes, great follies, and great glories; but from first to last it will appear, that amid many buffets of fortune, through "winter and rough weather," the Army of the Potomac never gave up, but made a good fight, and finally reached the goal.

Nor can there fail to arise the image of that other Army that was the adversary of the Army of the Potomac—and which who can ever forget that once looked upon it?—that array of "tattered uniforms and bright muskets"—that body of incomparable infantry, the Army of Northern Virginia—which for four years carried the Revolt on its bayonets, opposing a constant front to the mighty concentration of power brought against it; which, receiving terrible blows, did not fail to give the like; and which, vital in all its parts, died only with its annihilation.

Of this drama there will be no other hero than the Army of the Potomac itself; for it would seem that in this war of the

people it was decreed there should arise no imperial presence to become the central figure and cynosure of men's eyes. Napoleon, in an outburst of haughty eloquence, exclaims that in the great armies of history the Commander was every thing. "It was not," says he, "the Roman army that conquered Gaul, but Cæsar; it was not the Carthaginian army that made Rome tremble at her gates, but Hannibal; it was not the Macedonian army that marched to the Indus, but Alexander; it was not the Prussian army that defended Prussia for seven years against the three most powerful States of Europe, but Frederick." This proud apotheosis has no application for the Army of the Potomac. And one must think —seeing it never had a great, and generally had mediocre commanders—it was that it might be said, that whatever it won it owed not to genius, but bought with its blood.

I must now add, that it would be to fail to draw some of the most important lessons furnished by the history of the army whose deeds form the subject-matter of this volume, if I should fail to set forth the relations of that army with the central authority at Washington. The conduct of a war under a popular government introduces new conditions into the established military system and traditions, and greatly complicates the duties of the commander. Now the history of the Secession war affords a new and enlarged exhibition of the behavior of a representative executive suddenly charged with the direction of great military affairs. While a sense of justice will suggest the exercise of much lenience in the judgment of an Administration called to a difficult task, it is none the less incumbent on the historian to point out errors and follies that cost much.

In the campaigns of the Army of the Potomac there is presented a remarkable unity, both as regards the theatre of operations and the objective of operations. The theatre was Virginia; the objective, Richmond. The first military aspiration of the North expressed itself in the vehement cry, "On to Richmond:" and when, after many battles and campaigns,

—more than the wisest foresaw,—Richmond fell, the structure of the Confederacy fell with it.

But though the sphere of action is in the main bounded by the geographical limits of the State of Virginia, it resulted from the fact of the war assuming twice on the part of the insurgent force an aggressive character, that its area must be extended so as to include a part of the territory of the contiguous States of Maryland and Pennsylvania. This circumstance does not destroy, however, the unity of the zone within which the armies of the Potomac and of Northern Virginia operated. The battles of Antietam and Gettysburg—the two actions out of the limits of Virginia—were fought in the narrow salient of a great triangle, having the southern boundary line of Virginia as its base, the Shenandoah and Cumberland valleys as its western side, and the Susquehanna River and Chesapeake Bay as its eastern side. From its apex, this triangle measures seven hundred and fifty miles on its mountain-side, and about three hundred miles on its eastern side, with five hundred miles on its base line.

Now if it be considered that within this comparatively restricted space, two great armies manœuvred and fought during the protracted period of four years, and that for all that time, though surging backwards and forwards, each maintained its essential vantage-ground, there will arise the inference, either that the operations were conducted with little vigor, or else that there must have been some peculiar conditions that shut out victory from sooner declaring itself on the one side or the other.

But the former supposition is excluded by the palpable evidence, notorious to all the world, of the long record of bloody battles, and the terrible aggregate of losses sustained, in this conflict of Americans with Americans.

It results therefore that we must seek in the alternative the explanation of a historic fact seemingly so unaccountable. I shall briefly set forth some of the leading elements that enter into this problem as it stands related to the theatre of operations in Virginia and the conditions of warfare upon that

theatre. A proper appreciation of these conditions will help to explain the many bloody but indecisive battles that characterized the Virginia campaigns, and must modify the conclusions of those who, from a distance, vainly seek to apply European principles and precedents to warfare in a region affording hardly one element of legitimate comparison.

From the Potomac, as base, to Richmond, on the left bank of the James, as objective, the distance is one hundred and ten miles; and it is to be noted, first of all, that in this zone an army upon the defensive has its operations facilitated, while an army assuming the offensive has its operations rendered difficult, from the fact that the watershed being towards the coast, all the rivers cross any line of manœuvre against Richmond. These rivers are: the Occoquan, formed by the union of Bull Run and Cedar Run; the Rappahannock, swelled by the converging tides of the Rapidan and Hedgman rivers; the Mattapony, which results from the confluence of four streams, named the Mat, the Ta, the Po, and the Ny; the Pamunkey, formed by the union of the North and South Anna; and the Chickahominy, which has its embouchure in the James. The Confederates found eligible lines of defence along these rivers, which they used to great advantage, from the time when, at the opening of the war, Beauregard formed his array along Bull Run, to when, almost four years thereafter, Lee disputed with Grant the passage of the Chickahominy, and compelled the Union commander to seek a new base south of the James.

The mountain system of Virginia is thrown off on the western flank of the theatre of operations, where the Blue Ridge forms, with that parallel ridge called successively the Clinch, Middle, and Shenandoah mountains, the picturesque and fertile Valley of the Shenandoah. This valley, from its direction north and south, and its peculiar topographical relations, is an eminently aggressive line for a hostile force moving northward to cross the Potomac into Maryland, either with the view of penetrating Pennsylvania or of manœuvring

towards Washington. It was by this line that Lee issued upon the soil of the loyal States on the occasion of both the Confederate invasions—to wit, the Maryland invasion of 1862, and the Pennsylvania invasion of 1863. This circumstance compelled, throughout the war, the constant presence of a considerable army to guard the *débouché* of this great valley and the passes of the Blue Ridge; and the Shenandoah region was the scene of a series of operations having an intimate relation with those of the main theatre.

This, in general terms, may be defined as the territory between the Blue Ridge and Chesapeake Bay, and between the Potomac and the James.

This region has, as its characteristic feature, a dense forest of oak and pine, with occasional clearings—rarely extensive enough, however, to prevent the riflemen concealed in their margins from covering the whole opening with their fire. The roads are few, bad, and form so many defiles; and it was, throughout the war, commonly necessary for the axeman to precede the artillerist, to hew for him a path. It is rare, in all this tract of country, to find a field in which cavalry can have any legitimate play; and it frequently happened that, owing to the density of the forest, not even artillery could be employed.

It is easy to see that under these circumstances military operations must assume many peculiarities; and, it is to be added, these were much in favor of the defensive. The abundance of wood afforded such facility for the construction of breastworks and abatis, that, during all the late years of the Virginia campaigns, actions were invariably waged behind and about hastily improvised ramparts of earth and logs, with which every hundred yards gained was instantly intrenched. Under cover of these rude yet strong "coigns of vantage,"—with the infantry protected by a parapet, and equipped with the improved arms—with rifled artillery sweeping a front of two or three thousand yards, and this front obstructed by "slashings,"—the army on the defensive might await, with comparative security, the approach of lines of battle that were almost fore-

doomed to repulse. If, peradventure, driven from one line, the enemy could, with the greatest ease, take up another, and another. A campaign thus became a kind of rough siege; and in this state of facts, even victory was generally fruitless, because pursuit was impossible. The task of the commander increased in difficulty in the same proportion. Shut out from sight, and often even from hearing, the general on the field of battle was constrained to work in a manner blindfold, and compelled to rely on the firmness of his troops till couriers should arrive to bring tidings of the fight.

But the obstructions that beset American warfare are not confined to these distinguishing features of the *terrain;* for the difficulty of any extended operation became greatly enhanced by the question of subsistence, on which the mobility of an army so largely depends. There are two maxims that forcibly set forth the bearing of the commissariat on wars of invasion: the first is the saying of Frederick the Great, that "an army, like a serpent, moves on its belly;" the second is the declaration of Cæsar, that "war must support war." The former of these maxims asserts the absolute dependence of military operations on the means of feeding the operating army; the latter, that this dependence should be simplified by drawing supplies from the country in which the troops act. But while it is no less true in America than elsewhere that "an army, like a serpent, moves on its belly," the actual condition did not permit of carrying out the admonition to "make war support war." In the densely populated countries of Europe, it is easy, from the resources of the country, to subsist an army of a hundred thousand men; and Napoleon, while operating in the basins of the Rhine and Danube, and in the rich granaries of Belgium, Italy, and Swabia, constantly supported by requisitions much greater numbers. But in proportion as the population becomes thin, the productive forces decrease, and local sources of supply for an army decline or disappear altogether. What is possible in Germany, therefore, is impracticable in Poland, Russia, or America. In Virginia, no dependence whatever could be placed on procur-

ing local subsistence. The area of manœuvre was, therefore, circumscribed by the amount of rations that could be carried on the persons of the soldiers and in wagons, which in Virginia was not more than sufficient for from ten to sixteen days; while its transport necessitated immense trains of two, three, and four thousand wagons—an overgrown mass of *impedimenta* that made rapidity of movement almost impossible, and constantly bound in the commander to "saucy doubts and fears." Indeed, what alone made operations over the immense tracts of country overrun by the Union armies practicable was, first, that new agency in warfare, the railroad; and, secondly, the command of the seaboard by the North.

Now taking into account this cardinal maxim of American warfare, that an army operating over a large tract of country must pivot either on a railroad or a river, it appears that from Washington as a base, a force advancing against Richmond by the overland route, and having at the same time to cover Washington, is restricted to two lines of manœuvre: 1. The line of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad; 2. The line of the Fredericksburg and Richmond Railroad. Each of these lines was repeatedly essayed during the Virginia campaigns—the former by Pope and Meade; the latter by Burnside and Hooker. Touching the merits of these lines, experience confirmed what theory would have indicated: that the line of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, though an eminently defensive line as regards Washington, is hardly aggressive; and beyond the Rapidan involves so many complex considerations that no commander was ever able, on this line, to push an advance south of that river. The Fredericksburg route is an aggressive line as regards Richmond, though it is surrounded with many difficulties. It is not, however, a good defensive line as regards Washington; and experience has shown that an army operating by that line, and having also to cover Washington, may readily be dislodged from it and forced to attempt to regain the Orange and Alexandria line by a simple menace against the latter. And this fact suggests the reflection that railroads in war, though affording great facilities for

transport, and permitting the execution of operations that, without this resource, would be impracticable, have their own peculiar drawbacks, and require the detachment of a considerable part of the active force for their protection against hostile raids.

But it may be said that the possession by the North of the whole Virginia seaboard gave many other secondary bases and lines of operation, free from the objections above mentioned. This is undoubtedly true; yet the statement must be taken with the limitations that belong to it. The most important of these lines are the Peninsula between the York and James rivers, and the route by the south side of the James. The former was adopted by General McClellan in the spring of 1862, and the latter was eventually taken up by General Grant in the summer of 1864, after having, in a remarkable campaign, crossed every possible line of operation against Richmond. But it is manifest that Richmond could be operated against from the coast only by an army that was in condition to leave Washington out of the question. The secession of Virginia made the Potomac the dividing line between two warring powers; and the unfortunate location of the national capital on the banks of that river, and on an exposed frontier, profoundly affected the character of military operations in Virginia, and, during the first three years of the war, caused a subordination of all strategic combinations to the protection of Washington. Saving the time when McClellan moved to the Peninsula, and Grant swung across the James River, the Army of the Potomac was never allowed to "uncover" Washington. Now, in the former case, the first menace by Lee foreshadowing a northward movement caused the withdrawal of the army from the Peninsula; and, in the latter instance, a small raiding column, detached by way of the Shenandoah Valley into Maryland, compelled General Grant to part with two of his corps to protect the national capital, and, for the time, almost suspended active operations before Petersburg.

It remains now to add that the gigantic war whose prin-

cipal field was Virginia was one that, from its very nature, threw the burden of the offensive on the side of the North. For, as the National Government undertook to subdue the insurrection of the Southern States, it rested with it to strike, and with the South to parry. But it soon became apparent that the task was very different from that involved in the quelling of an ordinary rebellion, and that the conflict had, from the unanimity of hostile sentiment at the South, the vast extent of territory in insurrection, and the mighty force in arms, all the character of a war waged between two powerful nations. Now, of all the forms that war may assume, that is the most formidable which is denominated a "National War," the nature of which is thus powerfully depicted by the greatest of military theorists: "The difficulties in the path of an army in National wars are very great, and render the mission of the general conducting them very arduous. The invader has only an army; his adversaries have an army and a people wholly, or almost wholly, in arms—a people making means of resistance out of every thing, each individual of whom conspires against the common enemy; so that even the non-combatants have an interest in his ruin, and accelerate it by every means in their power. He holds scarcely any ground but that upon which he encamps; and, outside the limits of his camp, every thing is hostile, and multiplies a thousandfold the difficulties he meets at every step. These obstacles become almost insurmountable, when the country is difficult. Each armed inhabitant knows the smallest paths and their connections; he finds everywhere a relative or friend who aids him. The commander also knows the country, and, learning immediately the slightest movement on the part of the invader, can adopt the best measures to defeat his projects; while the latter, without information of their movements, and not in a condition to send out detachments to gain it, having no resource but in his bayonets, and certain of safety only in the concentration of his columns, is like a blind man—his combinations are failures; and when, after the most carefully concerted movements and the most rapid and

fatiguing marches, he thinks he is about to accomplish his aim and deal a terrible blow, he finds no sign of the enemy but his camp-fires; so that, while, like Don Quixote, he is attacking windmills, his adversary is on his line of communications, destroys the detachments left to guard it, surprises his convoys and depots, and carries on a war so disastrous for the invader that *he must inevitably yield after a time.*"

It needs not to tell any one who has followed the history of the Virginia campaigns, that every "sling and arrow" thus graphically shown to assail an army penetrating a hostile country in which the population as well as the army enters into the belligerency, did harass the Army of the Potomac. Yet it is not possible that any, save such as have had actual experience of command, can measure aright the obstructions of every nature that hedged military operations in a country unknown and unmapped, filled with a population ready to convey to the enemy information of every movement, and eager to cut a telegraph-wire or throw a railroad-train from its track. The Confederates, waging war on that theory that is named the "defensive with offensive returns," attempted, in two memorable campaigns, an operation of invasion; but the decisive failure that attended both, may stand as an example of the difficulties that constantly beset the Union army.

If, notwithstanding these difficulties, the Army of the Potomac at length succeeded in destroying its opponent,—thus disproving the *dictum* of General Jomini, who, in the passage I have just quoted, asserts that in such a task the invader "must inevitably yield after a time,"—it would appear to be a reasonable inference that the means by which this end was brought about must be notable, and that the army that accomplished this result may be worthy of a larger fame than the world has yet accorded it.

II.

THE THREE MONTHS' CAMPAIGN.

I.

WAR IN EMBRYO.

By the express terms of the ordinance of secession, passed by the Virginia Convention on the 17th of April, 1861, the decree that was to link the fortunes of that State with the Confederacy became valid only on being ratified by the popular vote, appointed to be given on the fourth Thursday of May. The Administration at Washington respecting this provision, awaited the action of the people before advancing its armed force to "repossess the places and property" of the Federal Government.

But it was soon manifest that this stipulation was destined to be a nullity in face of the swift-advancing realities of war. Virginia immediately threw herself into an attitude of defence. Governor Letcher issued a proclamation calling out the militia of the State, and Colonel Robert E. Lee was appointed major-general and commander of the "Virginia forces." More than this: the Convention having, on the 24th of April, decreed that pending the popular vote on the question of secession, "military operations, offensive and defensive, in Virginia, should be under the chief control and direction of the President of the Confederate States," Confederate troops, from South Carolina and the States of the Gulf, were rapidly thrown forward into Virginia. Meantime, the United States arsenal at Harper's Ferry had been evacuated and partially destroyed by the commander of the post; and the United States navy-yard at Norfolk had been abandoned by the

Federal officer in command, and several men-of-war, with a vast accumulation of war material, were there destroyed. Save from the fortress that guards the entrance of James River, the Federal flag floated nowhere within the boundaries of the "Old Dominion."

The Confederates, with much energy, pushed forward preparations for the defence of Virginia; and the middle of the month of May reveals the growing outlines of a definite military policy. This policy, however, so far as it touched the distribution of force, seems to have been shaped rather by the Austrian principle of covering every thing, than by any well-considered combination of positions. The Peninsula between the James and the York rivers was held by a Confederate force of about two thousand men, under Colonel J. B. Magruder, who took position near Hampton, where he confronted the Federal force at Fortress Monroe, which had lately been placed under command of Major-General B. F Butler. The defence of the highland region of Western Virginia had been assumed by General Lee, commander-in-chief of the State forces, who had dispatched to that section Colonel Porterfield, with instructions to raise a local volunteer force—not a promising undertaking among the hardy, Union-loving mountaineers—and hold the line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, the direct line of communication with the States west of the Alleghanies.

Between these outlying members was placed the main body of the Confederate force, in two camps—the one located at Manassas Junction, twenty-seven miles southwest from Alexandria, (and the point of intersection of the great Southern railroad route between Washington and Richmond and the Manassas Gap Railroad, leading to the Valley of the Shenandoah); the other posted at the outlet of this valley, at Harper's Ferry. The force assembled and assembling at the former of these camps was at first under the orders of General Bonham, of South Carolina; but before the close of May, the obvious importance of the position, as confronting any direct advance from Washington, caused the Confederate

authorities to assign to its command the man enjoying the first military reputation in the South. This man was General Beauregard, and the region of country under his control was named the "Department of the Potomac."

The body of troops collected at Harper's Ferry, and which, at the close of the month of May, consisted of nine regiments and two battalions of infantry, four companies of artillery, and about three hundred troopers,* had been formed under the hand of a man, then of no name, but destined to become one of the foremost figures of the war—Colonel Thomas Jonathan Jackson, better known in the world's bead-roll of fame as "Stonewall Jackson." A lieutenant of artillery in the United States service during the Mexican war, he had at its close retired to a professorship in the Virginia Military Institute, beyond whose walls he was quite unknown, and within which he was marked only for his personal eccentricities, stern puritanism, and inflexible discipline. Upon the secession of Virginia, Professor Jackson resigned his chair, and being appointed by Governor Letcher to a colonelcy in the Virginia line, he was immediately sent forward to command the Confederate troops at Harper's Ferry. About the time, however, that Bonham was replaced by Beauregard, the command of the force at Harper's Ferry, which bore the style of the "Army of the Shenandoah," was committed to the hands of General J. E. Johnston; and Colonel Jackson, assigned a subordinate command under that able soldier, devoted himself to moulding into form and stamping with the qualities of his own genius that famous "Stonewall brigade," whose battle-flag led the van in that series of audacious enterprises that afterwards rendered the Valley of the Shenandoah historic ground. General Johnston's other subordinates were men of scarcely inferior ability to Jackson. Colonel A. P Hill, subsequently one of Lee's ablest lieutenants, was at the head of another of his brigades; Pendleton was chief of artillery; and his few squadrons of Virginia

* Report of General J. E. Johnston.

horsemen were under command of Colonel J. E. B. Stuart, whom even then Johnston styled "the indefatigable," and who was also destined to a greater fame.

Thus far, the line of the Potomac had not been crossed. The soil of Virginia, which her inhabitants loved proudly to style "sacred," had felt the tread of no invading force. Popular notions hardly went beyond simply defending the capital; and not only many men who were supposed to be skilled in the calendar of state, but even the shepherds of the people, still flattered themselves with the hope that there would be no war—that all that was needed to quell the "rebellion" was an imposing display of force.* Meanwhile, volunteers, burdening all the railways that, from the North and East and West, converge on Washington, continued to accumulate on the Potomac. The insurrection that for a time had threatened to involve Maryland, and had broken out in open attack upon the first Federal troops that passed through Baltimore, had been subdued by the firm policy of the Administration, and direct railroad communication between the national capital and the North, for a time interrupted, had now been restored. By the middle of May, between forty and fifty regiments were encamped about Washington; and, at Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, a large force was accumulating under General Patterson, which by its position menaced Harper's Ferry. The presidential call had been for seventy-five thousand volunteers for a term of three months; but through the persuasion of General Scott, who well knew that it was no three months' affair the Government had on its hands, a supplementary call for forty thousand men, to serve for three years or the war was made. An increase of the force of the Regular army was also ordered. These troops were raised with the greatest alacrity, and each

* "It was a favorite notion with a large class of Northern politicians (and the people too) that nothing but an imposing display of force was necessary to crush the rebellion." General Barnard: The C. S A and the Battle of Bull Run, p. 42.

State soon so greatly outran its assigned quota, that energetic measures had to be taken to stop recruiting, until Congress, having assembled in extra session on the 4th of July, authorized a levy of Five Hundred Thousand Men. Meantime, the frontier had not been passed; and the pickets lounging at the bridges that span the Potomac from Washington to the Virginia shore, and the gray-uniformed videttes on the southern bank, observed each other without any hostile meaning in their opposing eyes.

But when the day came that the popular vote on the question of secession was taken, the war, which had thus far "drifted," took definite shape. Though there were yet no tidings what the vote had been, there was, nevertheless, no room for illusion as to its scope and purport; and that night, the night of the 23d of May, the van of the "grand army" passed the Potomac. After midnight, fifteen thousand troops were transferred by the Long Bridge, by the Aqueduct, and by steamers to Alexandria, situate on the right bank of the Potomac, and four or five miles below Washington. The city of Alexandria, and the Heights of Arlington, opposite Washington, with the intermediate connecting points, were seized without opposition. A few troopers, that held the town as an outpost of the force at Manassas, were captured; the remainder galloped off to bear the weighty tidings. The bloodless initiation of operations was beclouded by but one event, the murder of the young Colonel Ellsworth, of the Fire Zouaves, who was shot by a citizen within a hotel of the town of Alexandria, while bearing away a Confederate flag, which he had hauled down from the cupola of the building. Powerful earthworks, as *têtes-de-pont* to the Long Bridge and Aqueduct, were immediately constructed by the engineers; and forts were laid out to cover the approaches to Alexandria and Arlington. These formed the initiation of the system of "Defences of Washington."* The active force south of the Potomac was placed under the command of Brigadier-General Irvin McDowell,

* Barnard: Report of Engineer Operations, p. 9.

and held a position threatening advance against the Confederates at Manassas, by the line of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. Leaving it for the present in that attitude, I must now detail a series of initial operations in other parts of the theatre of war in Virginia.

The first of these operations is the affair, or, as it was at the time named, the *battle*, of Big Bethel,—an affair which, insignificant in itself, had a considerable moral effect in elating the Southern troops, and a correspondingly depressing effect upon the people of the North. This expedition, which is as remarkable for the crudity of its conception as for the blunders that marked its execution, was devised by General Butler for the purpose of capturing the Confederate posts at Little and Big Bethel, a few miles up the Peninsula from Fortress Monroe. The execution of the project was intrusted to one General Pierce, who, as it appears, had never been mustered into the United States service, and had no right to any command. The advance was made in two columns—the regiment of Duryea's Zouaves, followed by the Third New York Volunteers, under Colonel Townsend, on the right, by way of Hampton; and Bendix's New York regiment and a Vermont battalion on the left, by way of Newport News. The movement was begun during the night of the 9th of June, and it was designed to surprise the enemy before daylight next morning. The marches of the two columns were based on the showing of an old and incorrect map; and as from this the troops that had to move from Newport News were three miles nearer the point aimed at than the other column, it was arranged that they should start an hour after the others. The true state of the case, however, was, that they were four miles further; and just before daybreak the rear regiment of the left column, under Colonel Bendix, and the rear regiment of the right column, under Colonel Townsend (which had followed Duryea's regiment at an interval of two hours), met a a junction of roads near Little Bethel; and the former, mistaking the latter for an enemy, opened a fusillade, by which Townsend's regiment suffered a loss of twenty-nine in killed

and wounded before the *contretemps* was discovered.* The enemy at Little Bethel, getting the alarm, took flight, and the expedition then advanced on Big Bethel. This position, as it appears, was occupied as an outpost of Magruder's main body at Yorktown, and was held by a force of eleven hundred North Carolina and Virginia troops, under Colonel D. H. Hill, then in command of the First North Carolina regiment.† The position was rather advantageous for defence, being covered by a swampy creek, and further strengthened by some guns placed under cover. It was liable, however, to be easily turned by the right. General Pierce displayed a great incompetence in his dispositions; but it happened that there was one man there who saw the course of action suited to the case. Lieutenant-Colonel Warren suggested that a regiment should be sent round on each side to take the position in flank, and when these became engaged, those in front, lying in shelter in a wood, should attack. This operation, if carried out, would probably have been successful. But the regiment that was to make the movement on the enemy's right, instead of being directed by a detour through the woods, was advanced right across an open field, in front of the position, whereby it became exposed to an artillery fire. It happened, too, that the left company became separated from the rest of the regiment by a thicket; and Colonel Townsend not being aware of this, and seeing the glistening of bayonets in the woods, concluded the enemy was outflanking him, and so fell back to his first position. The regiment that had gone round on the other flank found itself in a difficult situation, where being exposed to pretty severe fire, it was found hard to bring the men up; and Major Winthrop, aid to General Butler, a young man of superior culture and promise,

* Lieutenant-Colonel, afterwards Major-General, Warren, at that time attached to Duryea's Zouaves, states in his evidence before the War Committee that "the two regiments, when they arrived on the ground, finding things not at all as they had been instructed, were justified in firing on each other." Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. iii., p. 384.

† Hill · Report of Big Bethel.

was killed while rallying the troops to the assault. Lieutenant Greble, of the regular artillery, who had handled his guns very skilfully and caused the enemy to withdraw a battery posted to command the road leading to Bethel, was also killed; and the aggregate loss was found to be about a hundred men. General Pierce then ordered a retreat, and the regiments marched off as on parade. Colonel Warren, who alone protested against the retreat, voluntarily remained on the ground, and together with Dr. Winslow, of his regiment, brought off the wounded. While he yet remained on the ground, the Confederates abandoned the position; and the reason for this step assigned by Colonel Hill is, that he feared re-enforcements would be sent up from Fortress Monroe.* The affair of Big Bethel really proved nothing, except that an attempt, involving failure in its very conception, *had* failed. Yet it was magnified as a great victory by the South; was put forth as a test of what was called "relative manhood;" and produced throughout the North a deep feeling of mortification and humiliation.†

This feeling was kept alive by a trivial fiasco which occurred shortly after in General McDowell's department. General Schenck had been ordered to make a reconnoissance up the Loudon and Alexandria Railroad to Leesburg; and setting out with a few hundred troops, upon a train of cars, he proceeded upon that novel kind of reconnoissance. The excursion was made uninterruptedly until the train neared Vienna, thirteen miles from Alexandria, when, turning a curve, it was suddenly opened upon by two guns planted near the track, the fire killing and wounding some twenty men. The troops immediately sprang from the cars and took to the woods; and the engineer having detached the locomotive, made all speed to Alexandria, leaving the excursionists to get back as best

* Hill: Report of Big Bethel.

† Colonel Hill, in a bombastic report published at the time, spoke of repulsing "desperate assaults," and pursuing "till the retreat became a rout," etc., etc.; while he himself was retiring without any reason whatever. This fustian found ready credence at the South.

might be, and the cars to be burnt by the enemy. The hostile force consisted of a small scouting party under Colonel Gregg, and did not pursue in the least. The adverse guns were, like those of Big Bethel, immediately set down as a "masked battery,"—a phantom of the imagination that played a really considerable part during the early stages of the war.*

But the discouragement caused by these lapses was destined soon to disappear under the influence of a series of very different operations in Western Virginia, from whose mountains was flashed the first gleam of positive victory upon the Union arms.

II.

McCLELLAN IN WEST VIRGINIA.

It has been seen, in an earlier part of this narrative, that the defence of Western Virginia, on the side of the Confederates, had been undertaken by General Lee, who had dispatched Colonel Porterfield to that region, for the purpose of raising there a local force. The object of this, it is probable, was not so much to undertake offensive operations across the Ohio River, as to coerce the loyal inhabitants into the secession movement.†

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* This "masked battery" theory was given by General Schenck in explanation of the affair at Vienna, touching which he says, in his dispatch of the time to General Scott: "We were fired upon by *raking masked batteries* of, I think, three guns, with shell, round-shot, and grape," etc. It would be difficult to say how much, and for how long a time, this absurd fiction of "masked batteries" affected operations; but it is certain that it had no inconsiderable influence. A curious illustration of this is given by General McDowell, in his evidence touching the battle of Bull Run. "The march," says he, "was slow,—one reason being, that since the affairs at Vienna and Big Bethel, a fear of 'masked batteries' *caused hesitation in regard to advance upon points concerning which there was a want of information.*" Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. ii., p. 4. So true to human nature is the maxim, "*Omne ignotum pro magnifico!*"

† The correctness of this view of the aim of the Confederates in West Virginia is fully confirmed by captured dispatches from General Lee to Colonel Porterfield.

Now about the middle of May, the States of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois had been formed into a department named the Department of the Ohio, and its control had by General Scott been intrusted to General George B. McClellan, formerly of the Corps of Engineers in the regular army, who having a short time previously been made major-general of the Ohio contingent under the three months' call, was now raised to the same rank in the regular army. His command being bounded on one side by the Ohio River, McClellan's attention was naturally attracted to the events passing on the other side of the frontier, within the limits of West Virginia. Finding the position of the Confederates both oppressive to the loyal inhabitants and menacing in a military point of view, General McClellan, about the end of May, without instructions from Washington, threw over a force to the Virginia side of the Ohio; and hearing of a secession camp at Phillippi, he ordered it to be broken up. The movement to this end was under way, when Porterfield, becoming aware of it, abandoned his position. McClellan having determined to occupy the whole region, had his Ohio regiments, as they were in succession equipped, transferred to the Virginia side. But the Confederates were indisposed to give up this mountain fastness; and accordingly, to meet the Union occupation, strong reenforcements, to the amount of six thousand men, were directed upon Western Virginia, and the command given to General Garnett, an old officer of the regular army. Garnett took up advantageous positions at Laurel Hill, a westward-facing sentinel of the Alleghany range, where he held command of the great road from Wheeling to Staunton,—the main highway of communications for the region west of the Alleghanies with that to the east of that mountain-wall,—and began a system of very active and very annoying partisan operations. In the course of a month General McClellan had on foot a considerable army, and he then determined to take the field against Garnett's force. The theatre of operations was that portion of Western Virginia contained between the Ohio and Cheat rivers in one direction, and the Baltimore and Ohio

Railroad and Great Kanawha and Gauley rivers in the other. The affluents of the Monongahela and the two Kanawhas divide this region into a number of narrow valleys, separated by rough and difficult hills, which rise into true mountains as they approach the heads of the Little Kanawha and the west fork of the Monongahela. The country here becomes alpine in its character. The roads practicable for wagons are few, narrow, and difficult. As cultivation is generally confined to the valleys, and the mountain-sides are obstructed by rocks and a dense growth of timber and underbrush, it is difficult even for skirmishers to move across the country, and it is not possible for troops and trains to march elsewhere than on the narrow roads. Positions suitable for handling artillery are rare, and cavalry is useful in that district only to convey intelligence. The resources of the country are inconsiderable.*

These characteristics of ground, which are the common characteristics of mountain regions, give to mountain warfare certain principles particular to it, and different from those that obtain in military operations in the plain. Thus mountain warfare readily admits of combined marches, which can seldom be employed in the plain. Such marches offer, in highland regions, no real danger, since the enemy is unable to throw himself between the columns: it is therefore sufficient that each column be strong enough to defend the valley in which it operates.† But the facility of the tactical defence of highlands renders it necessary for the assailant to seek to dislodge the enemy by manœuvres rather than direct attack: in other words, he should manœuvre offensively while he fights defensively; or, as Napoleon sums up the theory in one pregnant sentence, "the genius of mountain warfare consists in occupying camp on the flanks or on the rear of the enemy,

* McClellan: Campaigns in Western Virginia, p. 25.

† Vial: Cours d'Art et d'Histoire Militaires, vol. ii., p. 82. On this feature of mountain warfare, see also McDougall: Modern Warfare and Modern Artillery, p. 356.

so as to leave him only the alternative of evacuating his position without fighting, or of issuing to attack."*

I make this exposition of the theory of mountain warfare, because, as will presently appear, the operations of General McClellan in Western Virginia afford a very happy application of all the cardinal principles here laid down. The main turnpike from Staunton to Wheeling, which is the great highway across the mountains, was held by Garnett in an intrenched position, at Laurel Hill. This road, which here runs nearly southward, was his direct and natural line of retreat, and if cut off from that, his only chance of escape was by difficult roads over the mountains, eastward. Five miles below Garnett's main position at Laurel Hill, a road from the west passes through this spur at a defile known as Rich Mountain, and strikes the main road. To guard this approach against any menace directed upon his line of retreat, Garnett had placed here his second in command, Colonel Pegram, with a force of about one thousand men. McClellan, whose line of march was from the west, from the direction of the Ohio River, determined to dislodge Garnett and Pegram by striking their main line of retreat below the position held by the latter. Then, to make the operation decisive, he resolved to direct another column from the north to seize the only other avenue of escape, and thus, if possible, capture or destroy the whole adverse force.†

With the main column of two brigades, under Brigadier Generals Scheich and Rosecrans, the afterwards illustrious commander of the Army of the Cumberland and victor of Stone River, General McClellan moved from the west, by way of Clarksburg to Buchanon (July 2), twenty miles west of the hostile position. From here, several divergent expedi-

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* As authority on this same point, see also Dufour, Strategy and Tactics, p. 261; Jomini: Art of War, p. 168; Vial: Cours d'Art, etc., vol. ii., p. 83.

† In a letter to Lieutenant-General Scott, communicating his proposed plan of operations, McClellan adroitly put it that he should seek to "*repeat the manœuvre at Cerro Gordo.*"

tionary columns were sent out to mislead the enemy. Another column, composed of the brigade of General Morris, held position at Phillippi, about the same distance north of the enemy's stronghold, as General McClellan, at Buchanon, with his other two brigades, was west of it. The 7th of July, Morris was directed to advance southward to a position within a mile and a half of Garnett's camp at Laurel Hill, and by strong demonstrations give the enemy the impression that the main attack was to be made by him. The 8th, McClellan, with the brigades of Rosecrans and Scheich, moved eastward from Buchanon, and on the following afternoon came within two miles of Pegram's position at Rich Mountain. Having reconnoitred it, he resolved, instead of making a direct attack, to hold one of his brigades in front, while he sent Rosecrans by a detour by the right and southward, to lay hold of the enemy's main line of retreat, the turnpike, and then take Pegram's position in the rear. Setting out early in the morning, Rosecrans moved partly by mountain bridle-paths, and partly through rough and trackless woods and thickets of laurel. It rained incessantly. By noon he had gained Pegram's rear; but the latter, having captured a dragoon carrying dispatches from the Union commander, became aware of the plan, and effecting a partial change of front, posted a force of six hundred men and three guns to hold the crest of the mountain in his rear, while with the remainder he confronted the force McClellan held in his front. After a sharp fusilade, Rosecrans carried the crest, driving the defenders in upon Pegram's intrenchments; but against this force he did not push his advance, and as McClellan, awaiting the sounds of his musketry before joining in with a front attack heard none, the day passed by. During the night, Pegram evacuated his position, and attempted to join Garnett's main body, five miles north. After a day's wandering through the woods, being surrounded, he was compelled to surrender with six hundred men, the few remaining hundreds escaping. Meantime, Garnett, alarmed at the forces gathering around him on all sides, also abandoned his position at Laurel Hill.

But, attempting with about four thousand men to make good his escape southward, he found McClellan already grasping his line of retreat, and he then fled eastward over the mountains. Being vigorously pursued, he was twice brought to a stand and severely handled; but forces that the Union commander had directed to move from the north and east to intercept the flying enemy, did not act with sufficient promptness,* so that the operation was not as decisive as it otherwise must have been. The last stand made by Garnett was at Carrick's Ford, at the passage of the Cheat River, where he was attacked by the advance of General Morris's brigade† on the 13th, driven in disorder, losing all his guns and baggage, and General Garnett himself, while gallantly striving to rally his rear-guard, was killed. This ended the brief and brilliant campaign in the mountains, and General McClellan was able to telegraph to Washington as its result the capture of a thousand prisoners, with all the enemy's stores, baggage, and artillery, and the complete disruption of the hostile force. "Secession," he added, "is killed in this country."

The result of this miniature campaign was most inspiriting to the people of the North, and had an effect far beyond its intrinsic importance, just as had in another way the fiascos of Big Bethel and Vienna. It is the moral influence of small successes and small defeats, that in the first stages of a war makes their importance and forms the real measure of their value. All great commanders have understood this well. The campaign in West Virginia was conducted agreeably to military principles,—a characteristic that did not belong to other operations thus far; and its execution, as well as the fact that it was undertaken by General McClellan of his own motion, and without countenance from Washington, stamped him as a man of superior ability.

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* McClellan: Campaign in Western Virginia, p. 34.

† This attack was made by the Fourteenth Ohio, the Seventh and Ninth Indiana, and a section of Barnett's battery.

III.

THE BATTLE OF BULL RUN.

When in a national crisis the thoughts of men, and even the policy of the Government are in that condition which is expressed by the term *drifting*, wonderful is the effect of a phrase that crystallizes the floating and half-formed sentiments of the people into a definite theory. Such a phrase, about the time reached by this narrative, arose in the North. Thus far, no well-defined military policy guided the conduct of the war. The series of small outlying operations already sketched were, with the exception of those in West Virginia, crude in conception, undertaken at haphazard, and aimed at no definite result. But when Congress assembled in extra session, on the 4th of July, the effervescent enthusiasm of the country found expression in a phrase that, as it perfectly embodied the popular sentiment, was presently echoed throughout the whole North. This phrase was, "On to Richmond."

Now, in such popular cries there is always a certain element of the ideal; and hence we may suppose that this one did not so much imply a literal movement "on to Richmond," as it expressed with emphasis and in definite shape the conviction of the popular mind that immediate action should be taken against the rebellious force that had ensconced itself in the Manassas stronghold, only a few miles in front of the Federal capital. No doubt there were many that actually believed the Union force might not only drive the enemy from Manassas, but really follow "on to Richmond." It need hardly be said, however, that an overland march to Richmond by the force then assembled at Washington would have been an impossibility, even had there been no enemy to oppose the adventure. The people, conscious of great earnestness and enthusiasm, were unconscious either of the nature of the task they had set themselves to do, or the nature of the means

needed to carry it through. They knew that the rebels were at Manassas. They saw around Washington an imposing martial array, which they fondly named the "Grand Army of the United States;" and they could not understand what, after almost three months of preparation, could possibly hinder the advance of that army against the confronting enemy, and even on to the capital seat of the rebellion.*

The veteran soldier who, burdened with years and the infirmities of nature, remained at the head of the United States army, and to whom, by consequence, it fell to direct the military councils at Washington, was ill-fitted to grapple with the tremendous problem forced upon him. General Scott knew well war and war's needs. He knew that the imposing array of patriotic citizens who, dressed and armed to represent soldiers, lay around Washington, was but the simulacrum of an *army;* that to this mass were wholly wanting the organization, discipline, experience, whatever, in fact, goes to the fashioning of that most complex of living organisms. But it was little that he should know this, when those in power, who knew it not and would not know it, were determined to act as if it were not. Indeed he had himself to assume that it was not, and proceed in the work of forming a plan of campaign for immediate action. Now, a plan of campaign General Scott could well devise; for he was a man that knew generalship and grand war; had himself plucked laurels on the field of battle before the present generation of men was born; and long years ago, in Europe, had discussed the highest principles of the military art with the great marshals of Napoleon. But all this only served to separate him and his views and plans the more hopelessly from those with whom he had to deal. He was opposed to what he called "a

* "The country could not understand, ignorant as it was of war and war's requirements, how it could possibly be true that, after three months of preparation and of parade, an army of thirty thousand men should be still utterly unfit to move thirty miles against a series of earthworks held by no more than an equal number of men." Hurlbut: McClellan and the Conduct of the War, page 103.

little war by piecemeal." He was averse to fighting at all in Virginia, which he did not regard as a theatre for decisive action, and thought that the Union army should strike its first blow in the basin of the Mississippi. But what were such views to the ardent congressmen and cabinet councillors to whom Beauregard's blazon at Manassas was the picador's flag to the infuriate bull? They prevailed. General Scott has confessed it: his moral firmness gave way under the pressure of an Administration that was in turn goaded almost to frenzy by a press and people demanding *action* at all hazards.

There was, therefore, to be an advance of the army in front of Washington; and early in July the duty of planning and executing a movement against Beauregard at Manassas devolved upon General McDowell, who, since the transfer of the Union force into Virginia, had been put in command of the column of active operation south of the Potomac, and of the Department of Northeastern Virginia. This column numbered about thirty thousand men.

The officer to whom it thus fell to lead the main army to its first field was a man of no mean capacity as a soldier. Of the staff of the old regular army, McDowell was distinguished for his fine professional acquirements; and having studied the theory of war and seen European armies, he was, of the small body of trained soldiers, perhaps the man best qualified for the command. That he had never commanded any considerable body of men on the actual field was a drawback shared by every other officer in the service.

General McDowell knew perfectly well the kind of material with which he had to work, and its greenness and unfitness to take the field; and he did his best to improve it. This he might readily have done, had he had to grapple merely with this work; but his main struggle was elsewhere: and he has left a picture, half pathetic and half ludicrous, of his unavailing plea for a little common sense with those whose ardor was only equalled by their ignorance. "I wanted," says he, "very much a little time—all of us wanted it. We did not have a bit of it." To his plea of the

"greenness" of his troops, the answer, more specious than well taken, was constantly returned—"You are green, it is true; but *they* are green also: you are all green alike."*

So far from having time to mould his army, many of his regiments were brought across the Potomac at the last moment, without his even seeing them, and without being even brigaded. He had, therefore, no opportunity to test his machinery—to move it round and see whether it would work smoothly or not; and such was the feeling, that when, on one occasion, McDowell had a body of eight regiments reviewed together, he was censured for "trying to make a show."† Even the special circumstance that should have caused delay,—to wit, the fact that a large part of the best, that is, the best-armed, drilled, officered, and disciplined troops in front of Washington consisted of three months' volunteers whose term of service was about to expire,—was an incentive to precipitate action. These troops had fulfilled the duty for which they were called out, which was to assure the safety of the national capital; their presence had given time to organize a force for the war; Congress had authorized a call for five hundred thousand three years' volunteers, and these were thronging to the Potomac. It is certainly easy to see that the dictate of prudence was this: not to attempt to employ the three months' men in active operations, but to organize and mobilize, from the three-year troops, an adequate army for the field. Other counsels prevailed, and the army with which McDowell took the field was an army without organization, or a staff, or a commissariat, or an organized artillery.‡ The wonder, indeed, is not that he

* Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 38. † Ibid.

‡ "Being *tête-à-tête* with McDowell, I saw him do things of detail which, in any even half-way organized army, belong to the specialty of a chief of the staff. McDowell received his corps in the most chaotic state. Almost with his own hands he organized, or rather put together, the artillery. Brigades are scarcely formed; the commanders of brigades do not know their commands, and the soldiers do not know their generals." Gurowski: Diary. 1861–2, p. 61. Mr. Russell (My Diary North and South, pp. 424–5) makes some striking statements to the same purpose.

should not have done more, but that he did so much; and the spirit of forbearance and alacrity with which he entered upon and carried through his trying task, entitles him to great credit.

In entering upon the special problem assigned him, it was not possible for General McDowell to avoid taking into account not only his immediate enemy at Manassas, but whatever other hostile forces, distributed over the theatre of war in Virginia, might influence the fortunes of his projected expedition. The occupation of Manassas had been recommended to the Confederates, from the very fact that it was the centre of the railroad system of Northern Virginia—at the junction of the great southern railroad route connecting Washington with Richmond, and the Manassas Gap Railroad leading to the Valley of the Shenandoah. The former highway connected Beauregard with the forces on the Peninsula and at Richmond (distant by railroad about seventy-five miles); the latter, with the army under Johnston, in the Shenandoah Valley (distant by railroad about seventy miles). The Confederates, in fact, held a line interior to the forces of Butler, McDowell, and Patterson—respectively at Fortress Monroe, in front of Washington, and on the Upper Potomac. This distribution of the Union armies was a fault to which General McDowell was quite alive; but he had assurances from the lieutenant-general that the enemy on the Peninsula should be occupied by General Butler, and that Johnston's forces in the Shenandoah Valley should be held there by General Patterson. On expressing his fears in regard to Johnston, a few days before the opening of the campaign, General McDowell was assured by General Scott that, "if Johnston joined Beauregard, he should have Patterson on his heels."*

With this understanding, McDowell projected a plan of operations against Manassas, which was substantially to

* For more on the same subject, see McDowell's testimony: Report on the Conduct of the War.

advance by Fairfax Courthouse, there make a sudden movement to the left, and, crossing the Occoquan just below the junction of that stream with Bull Run (thus turning Beauregard's right), strike at the enemy's railroad communications. This project was submitted to the cabinet and agreed to, and the 9th of July was fixed as the day when the army should move. Owing, however, to the deficiency of transportation and supplies, the advance was not begun till a week later.

With the view of giving effect to that part of the military programme which provided that Johnston's force in the Shenandoah Valley should be neutralized, General Patterson was, on the 2d of July, again ordered across the Potomac from Maryland. He made the passage of the river at Williamsport, and took position at Martinsburg. Johnston then held post near Winchester with a force of about eight thousand men.* The specific duty assigned to Patterson was, in view of the impending battle in front of Washington, to defeat Johnston or prevent his making a junction with Beauregard at Manassas. For this purpose, the force of twelve thousand men with which General Patterson had crossed the Potomac was augmented to an effective of about eighteen thousand.† Now, from the relative position of the contending forces, it is evident that the only method of accomplishing the latter purpose, to wit, preventing Johnston from re-enforcing Beauregard, was to adopt the former course—namely, to attack Johnston. If Patterson, therefore, was not in condition to do this, his force should immediately have been withdrawn to the front of Washington and united with McDowell's. General Scott *expected* Patterson to attack Johnston,‡ but he gave no imperative order to do so; and Patterson, who though more than doubly outnumbering his opponent, fancied Johnston had "at least forty thousand men," and that the

* This estimate I derive from General Johnston himself.

† Patterson: Campaigns in the Valley of the Shenandoah, p. 63.

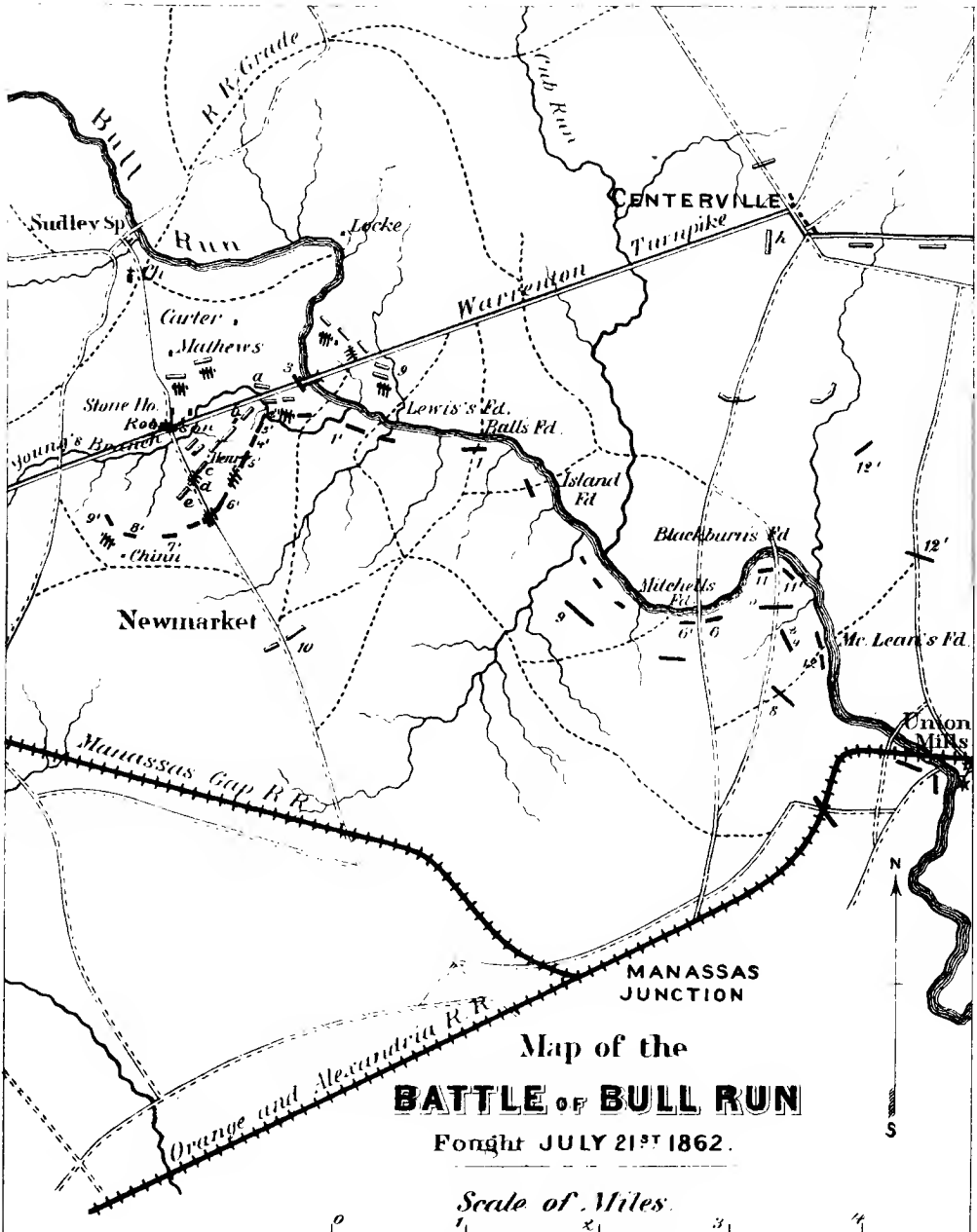
‡ "I have certainly been expecting you to beat the enemy; if not, to hear that you had felt him strongly, or at least had occupied him by threats and demonstrations." Dispatch from General Scott, July 18th.

wily enemy "had a trap set *somewhere*" for him,* feared either to demonstrate or attack. His conduct was certainly feeble; and his marches and countermarches, made far from the enemy, were ridiculous. At Martinsburg his position was a false one, where, instead of threatening the enemy, the enemy threatened him. At length, when informed that the army in front of Washington was actually under way, he (July 15th) advanced his force from Martinsburg to Bunker's Hill, from which point he, on the 17th, fell off upon Charlestown, near Harper's Ferry, and Johnston was left free to move to form a junction with Beauregard! This was precisely what Johnston now found occasion to do. As will presently appear, McDowell's reconnoitring parties appeared in front of Bull Run on the 18th of July. On the same day a message reached Johnston from Beauregard: "If you wish to help me, now is the time." Johnston promptly availed himself of the opportunity to escape unmolested. Making a rapid flank march by way of Ashby's Gap, he took cars on the Manassas Gap Railroad at Piedmont, and joined Beauregard with his advance brigades on Saturday, the 20th. What part they played in the coming battle will presently appear.

General McDowell moved his army from the banks of the Potomac on the afternoon of July 16th. The movable column consisted of four divisions—the First Division, under General Tyler; the Second, under General Hunter; the Third, under General Heintzelman; the Fifth, under Colonel Miles. The Fourth Division, under General Runyon, was left in the works on the south bank of the Potomac. These divisions made an

* Patterson: Narrative of the Campaign in the Valley of the Shenandoah, p. 57.

General Johnston, in conversation with the writer touching this point, made a ludicrous comment on Patterson's statement of his numbers. On my mentioning to him that Patterson, in a Narrative recently published, had put down the Confederate strength at forty thousand, General Johnston laughingly exclaimed: "Why, if he had really thought that I had forty thousand, or half that number, sooner than have crossed the Potomac he would have thrown himself headlong into it."



REFERENCES

Union Troops.

a. Keyes
b. Sherman
c. Franklin
d. Howard
e. Wilcox
f. Porter
g. Schenk
h. Miles

Confederate Troops.

First & Last Positions

1. 1st Cocke
2. 2d Barton
3. 3d Evans
4. 4th Bee
5. 5th Jackson
6. 6th Bonham
7. 7th Elzy
8. 8th Early
9. 9th Stuart's Cav.
10. 10th Ewell
11. 11th Longstreet
12. 12th D. R. Jones
13. 13th Radford's Cav.

Engraved for Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac.

aggregate of about thirty-five thousand men. They moved in four columns: one by the turnpike; one by the lateral country roads on the right; one on the left of the railroad; and another between the turnpike and railroad, following what is known as the "Braddock" road.* It was known that Fairfax Courthouse was held as an outpost by a brigade of South Carolina troops, and the three right columns were directed to co-operate on that point with the view of capturing this force; but on entering the place, at three o'clock on the afternoon of the 17th, it was found abandoned. General McDowell had hoped to have his columns concentrated at Centreville that night, but the troops being unused to march, did not arrive till the following day. As it was, however, the march was really made with a good deal of rapidity. From Centreville, General McDowell proceeded to push out reconnoissances, with a view to the projected manœuvre by his left; but examination soon proved the impracticability of the ground for this purpose. Moreover, the character of General McDowell's move was revealed to Beauregard by an affair which the weak ambition of a division commander brought on that afternoon at Blackburn's Ford, on Bull Run. General Tyler had been ordered with his division to occupy Centreville, and thence "observe the roads to Bull Run," but was cautioned "not to bring on any engagement."† In obedience to this he pushed a brigade forward to Blackburn's Ford, which proved to be about the centre of Beauregard's true defensive line along Bull Run. Reaching the heights on the northern side of the stream, he opened an artillery fire with two twenty-pounder rifle-guns, which had the effect of first developing and afterwards silencing the enemy's battery near the ford. Thus far he had not exceeded his instructions; but he had the impression that the enemy would run whenever seriously menaced; and he declared that "the great man of the war would be the

* So called from its having been made by that general on his memorable march to Fort Duquesne, in 1754, which terminated in his disastrous defeat and death.

† McDowell's order: Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 46.

man that got to Manassas, and he meant to go through that night."* His notion of the method of executing this project was to file his brigade down to the stream, draw it up parallel to the other shore, and open an unmeaning fusillade.† While engaged in this foolery, a force crossed the stream from the other side, and striking his left flank (the Twelfth New York), disrupted it completely. This admonished General Tyler to defer his intended visit to Manassas that night, and he withdrew. The loss was inconsiderable, but the effect on the *morale* of the raw troops was bad.

In consequence of the abandonment of the plan of operation on the Confederate right, the next two days (July 19th and 20th) were spent by the engineers in reconnoitring and determining how and where the attack should be made. It was found that there was a good ford over Bull Run at Sudley Spring, two miles above the point where the direct road from Centreville to Warrenton crosses Bull Run by the Stone Bridge. It was also found that this ford was unguarded by the enemy, and that above that point the stream was almost everywhere easily passable. On these data was based the plan of attack, which was as follows: The Fifth Division (Miles) to remain in reserve at Centreville, and to make with one of its brigades, added to Richardson's brigade of Tyler's division, a false attack at Blackburn's Ford; the First Division (Tyler) to move by the turnpike up to the Stone Bridge at daybreak, threaten that point, and, at the proper time, to carry it or cross if uncovered from above. Meantime, the principal column, consisting of the two divisions of Hunter and Heintzelman, of about twelve thousand men, was to diverge from the turnpike to the right a mile beyond Centreville, and, by a detour, reach Sudley Ford; thence, descending the right bank of Bull Run, it would take the defences of the Stone Bridge in reverse. The united force would then give

* My authority for this statement is Colonel Alexander, of the Corps of Engineers, then engineer on Tyler's staff.

† Barnard: The Battle of Bull Run, p. 49.

battle, strike at the enemy's railroad communications, or act otherwise as circumstances might dictate.* It was an excellent plan of battle.

The execution of this plan was set on foot three hours after midnight of the 20th, when the troops, breaking camp at Centreville, launched on their novel adventure, and, in a dewy moonlight night, took up the march destined to bring them into presence of the enemy. The divisions had been ordered to march at half-past two A. M., with the view of getting on the ground early in the morning of the 21st. Tyler's division had the advance on the main road from Centreville; and, as the two divisions under Hunter and Heintzelman, to which was intrusted the turning movement, had to follow on this road up to the point where they were to diverge to the right, it was especially urgent that no obstruction should bar their march. Nevertheless, there was delay in getting Tyler's division out of camp and on to the road, and delay in its advance, which, of course, retarded the turning column. Then the road over which Hunter and Heintzelman had to pass was found to be longer than was expected; so that, instead of getting into position by six in the morning, it was, as will subsequently appear, nine before this column debouched on the southern side of Bull Run, at Sudley's Spring. Tyler, meanwhile, had pushed on, and, by six, drew up his division in front of Stone Bridge, where he opened an artillery fire on the enemy on the opposite side of Bull Run.

While the columns of McDowell were thus under way, events of equal moment were passing within the Confederate camp. General Johnston in person had joined Beauregard during the night of the 20th (his troops, however, not having yet arrived), and, being the ranking officer, he assumed command of all the Confederate forces. Nevertheless, as Beauregard knew his ground, the plans he had formed were adopted, and Johnston directed their execution under him. This plan contemplated an offensive movement before

* McDowell: Order of Battle.

McDowell should be able to strike; but, as a body of five thousand troops of Johnston's force, that were expected to arrive during the night from the Shenandoah Valley, did not reach the ground till some hours later, other dispositions had to be made.*

Beauregard, in stationing his forces, had committed the error of treating the line of Bull Run as a real defensive line that could be passed only at the fords; and hence he had stationed his brigades at these several fords—the brigades of Ewell and Holmes, at Union Mills Ford, forming his right; the brigades of Jones and Early, at McLean's Ford; the brigades of Longstreet and Jackson, at Blackburn's Ford; and Bonham's brigade, at Mitchell's Ford. Other commands were in reserve and between these forces, while Colonel Evans, with a demi-brigade, held Stone Bridge, which formed the Confederate left. Meantime, he had neglected to note that on his left, from Sudley Springs up, Bull Run could be passed anywhere. When, therefore, at six o'clock of the morning of the 21st, Beauregard learned from Colonel Evans that a Federal force (which was the head of Tyler's column) had drawn up opposite Stone Bridge, he assumed the attack would be made there—that is, against his left. He was ignorant that the real menace was a turning movement to take his whole line in the rear. Beauregard's military inspirations were, however, always essentially aggressive; and, on learning the appearance of the hostile force at Stone Bridge (being still unaware of the flanking operation in execution above), he resolved to assume the offensive to relieve his left. He judged the most effective method of accomplishing this, to be a counter move by his right and centre on the Union flank and rear at Centreville; and with this view orders were dispatched to General Ewell, whose brigade formed the right of the Confederate line at Union Mills Ford, to begin the movement, which was to be followed up by the brigades of Jones, at McLean's Ford; Longstreet, at Black-

* Beauregard: Report of the Battle of Manassas.

burn's Ford; and Bonham, at Mitchell's Ford.* I must add here a fact which is an evidence that the staff-organization of the Confederate Army was, at this time, little better than that of the Union Army—these orders did not reach their destination for four hours after the time they were sent; and this, as will presently appear, gave a very peculiar turn to the whole earlier part of the battle.

Meanwhile, the force of Tyler had deployed in front of Stone Bridge, and a scattering skirmish fire was opened between his troops and those of Evans on the opposite side of Bull Run. This served as an excellent mask for the column executing the turning move, as it occupied the attention of the force behind Stone Bridge for a couple of hours—that is, till about half-past eight. But, about that time, Evans becoming satisfied of the counterfeit character of the demonstrations on his front, and persuaded of an attempt to turn his left flank,† changed front, and marched towards Sudley Springs, leaving a skirmish line to observe for the while the Federal force opposite the Stone Bridge. Thus it was that the opposing forces were moving to meet each other; and when, towards ten o'clock, the head of Hunter's column, having passed to the right bank of Bull Run, by way of Sudley Ford, and advanced for a mile through a thick wood, debouched into the open country beyond, the gray-jackets could be descried already drawn up in line of battle. Colonel Evans, with his demi-brigade, had taken up a position west of the Warrenton road, almost at right angles to Bull Run, and considerably in advance of the ridge on which the main Confederate line was afterwards drawn.

Had now, at the first encounter, a moderate degree of skill or energy marked the conduct of the Union commander present on the field, there is little doubt that success was at this moment in the hands of General McDowell, who deserved

* "By such a movement," adds Beauregard, "I confidently expected to achieve a complete victory for my country by 12 o'clock M." Report of the Battle of Manassas.

† Beauregard: Report of the Battle of Manassas.

success for the excellence of his generalship. A powerful body was, by a flank movement, planted on the southern side of Bull Run, and Beauregard's defensive line was taken in reverse. It is true this part of the plan should have reached this stage of development by six o'clock in the morning, and it was now ten; but this was not enough to jeopardize the success of the scheme, for Beauregard was ignorant of what had taken place. It is also true that Colonel Evans, divining the move, had effected his change of front to meet the Federal advance; but his entire force consisted of but nine weak companies, and Hunter had twelve thousand men.

But there was present neither the skill nor the energy to take advantage of these circumstances; and the manner in which the troops were brought up affords a striking illustration of the then greenness of even the foremost officers of the army. In place of making proper dispositions in a line of battle, General Hunter caused a feeble fusilade to be opened from the head of the column; and Colonel Burnside's Rhode Island regiments, thrown in alone, were speedily cut up. This wasted an hour. To aid Burnside's hard-pressed command, the brigade of Colonel A. Porter was ordered up and deployed on his right, and Sykes' battalion of Regulars relieved him on the left. A serious advance of this line soon began to press the handful of Confederates back; but Evans was speedily re-enforced by portions of the brigades of Colonels Bee and Barton, who were at hand near the Stone Bridge, and, by these united forces, a fresh stand was made on a position still west of Young's Branch. But the increasing pressure of the Union line, strengthened now by the addition of portions of Heintzelman's division coming in on the left, compelled the Confederates to yield ground, and they were presently forced back sufficiently to allow Tyler's force near Stone Bridge to commence crossing to the south side and join in the combat.

Commanding one of Tyler's brigades was one Colonel W. T. Sherman, afterwards of some repute in the world as the man who led the armies that marched from Chattanooga to

Atlanta, and from Atlanta to the sea. This officer, who displayed even in the war's infancy something of that same military talent that, developed by experience, made him among the foremost of Union commanders, had discovered, while reconnoitring in the morning, an unknown ford, half a mile above the Stone Bridge.* Being ordered to cross Bull Run to the assistance of the forces on the other side, he was enabled to do so by this ford long before the Stone Bridge was uncovered for the passage. Keyes' brigade of the same division followed, and both succeeded in making a junction with the force engaged. This done, the whole advanced, and drove the enemy back across Young's Branch and over the Warrenton road and up the slopes on the other side. The Confederates went back in much disorder, and were only rallied on an elevated ridge or table-land beyond Young's Branch.†

While these events, in the prelude of the battle, were going on, Beauregard and Johnston, from their headquarters, near the centre of the line, marked the outburst of battle on their left flank, and listened eagerly and anxiously for similar sounds from the direction of Centreville, resulting from the prescribed counter-attack in that quarter by the Confederate right. "To my profound disappointment," adds the Confederate commander, "I learned, just about the time that the force on the left had been driven back by the advance of the Federals, that my order to General Ewell had miscarried." Judging it too late for the effective execution of the contemplated move, Beauregard found himself, as he states, "forced to depend on new combinations to meet the enemy on the field upon which he had chosen to give us battle."‡ Leaving Ewell, Jones, Longstreet, and Bonham at their positions along

* "Early in the day, when reconnoitring the ground, I had seen a horseman descend from a bluff to the bank, cross the stream, and show himself in the open field. Inferring we could cross," etc. Sherman: Report of Bull Run.

† The disorder that pervaded the Southern force at this time is freely acknowledged by General Johnston, whose official report is marked by a candor not observable in that of Beauregard.

‡ Report of the Battle of Manassas.

the lower fords to make demonstrations against the Federal forces opposite and prevent their going to re-enforce McDowell's right, the reserves, consisting of Holmes' two regiments and a battery, Early's brigade, and two of Bonham's regiments and a battery, were immediately ordered up to support the Confederate left flank, now so seriously imperilled. Jackson, who with his brigade of five regiments had been in reserve not far from the Stone Bridge, went up just at the time that Evans, and Bee, and Barton, who had been holding the advance position, had given way, and were attempting to rally and reform their troops on the plateau.* At this juncture, Beauregard and Johnston reached the field, and it required their best personal efforts to hold the men to their work. This accomplished, Beauregard took command on the field, while Johnston went to the rear to hurry up re-enforcements from his army arriving from the Valley.

The Confederates had now been forced back a mile and a half, and the Union force had cleared its front completely across the Warrenton road; the Stone Bridge was uncovered, and McDowell drew up his line on the crest gained, with Heintzelman's division (brigades of Wilcox and Howard) on the right, supported by part of Porter's brigade and the cavalry under Palmer, and Franklin's brigade of Heintzelman's division; Sherman's brigade of Tyler's division in the centre; and Keyes' brigade of Tyler's division on the left. Beauregard reformed his forces on the plateau beyond. His line of battle consisted of about six thousand five hundred men, thirteen pieces of artillery, and two companies of Stuart's cavalry.

The definitive possession of this plateau now became the

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* He came not a moment too soon. Bee approaching Jackson, and pointing to the mingled remnants of his own command, and the shattered brigades of Barton and Evans huddled up in the woods, exclaimed, "General, they are beating us back." "Sir, we'll give them the bayonet," replied Jackson; and Bee, rushing back to his troops, rallied them with the words: "There is Jackson, *standing like a stone wall;* let us determine to die here, and we will conquer."

prize eagerly contested by the opposing force. This height is on three sides inclosed by small water-courses, which empty into Bull Run within a few yards of each other, and half a mile to the south of Stone Bridge. Rising to an elevation of quite one hundred feet above the level of Bull Run at the bridge, it falls off on these sides to the level of the inclosing streams in slopes which are gentle, but furrowed by ravines of irregular direction and length, and shaded with clumps and patches of young pines and oaks. The general direction of the crest of the plateau is oblique to the course of Bull Run. Around its eastern and southern brow an almost unbroken fringe of second-growth pines gave excellent shelter to the Southern sharp-shooters. To the west, adjoining the fields, directly across the crest, on both sides of the Sudley road, extends a broad belt of oaks, in which, during the battle, regiments of both armies met and contended for the mastery.

Having obtained possession of the ridge, the main effort of the Union forces was made to work round and envelop the left flank of the Confederate line. This was a manœuvre which promised well, but, unfortunately, the army was hardly in a condition to execute it; for, worn out in the hot day's work, it had already lost its cohesion, and errors were committed of which the Confederates speedily took advantage. The batteries of Griffin and Ricketts, which had played a brilliant part during the conflict, had been ordered by General McDowell to the top of the ridge on the right, so as to take advantage of the success gained. These batteries were supported by the Fire Zouaves and Marines, while the Fourteenth New York regiment was directed into a skirt of wood on the right, to protect that flank. The quick eye of Jackson, who held position in front, saw the exposed position and feeble support of Griffin's battery, and he threw forward the Thirty-third Virginia to take it. Nor till they emerged from the skirt of woods, not a thousand yards distant, was the danger known; and when Griffin was about to open on them, the chief of artillery, Major Barry, restrained him from so doing, conceiving they were the Fourteenth New York,

that had been thrown into the woods on the right in support. Jackson's men made a dash on the battery, and the supports giving way, took possession of the guns, many of the cannoniers being shot down and the horses killed. Fresh forces were, however, brought up, the Confederates were driven back, and the guns retaken. Beauregard then advanced the right of his line in an attempt to recover the plateau and the guns. This effort was partially successful, but it was met by a fresh rally of the Union forces; and thus the tide of battle repeatedly surged backwards and forwards, with varying success to each combatant. Finally, towards three in the afternoon, a fresh accession of force having arrived from the incoming troops of Johnston, Beauregard made a determined effort to recover the disputed plateau. The attack was vigorously made, and swept back the Union forces from the whole open ground—the batteries of Griffin and Ricketts being again and finally captured. Still, the Union line, though shaken and giving ground, did not yield the field. A fresh effort was even made to extend the right so as to envelop the Confederate left. While this movement was in execution, the brigade of Early, the rear of the army of the Shenandoah, reached the field from Manassas Junction, and coming in on the Union right flank (exposed and badly placed),* determined the action. Many of the regiments, especially on that wing, were already badly used up, and had lost their organization. The fire from the fresh arrivals doubled up this flank and drove it back in a confusion which, presently, involved the whole line, extending even to the left, which had hitherto shown more consistency, and was even advancing. The whole force was thrown back in disorder, across and over the ridge, and over Young's Branch, and, in extreme confusion, made in all available directions towards Bull Run. Every effort was made to rally the troops, even beyond the

* "The enemy's new formation exposed his right flank more even than the previous one." Johnston: Report of the Battle of Manassas.

reach of fire, but in vain. The battalion of Regulars, alone justifying the traditions of military discipline, made a brief stand on the margin of the ridge, to allow the volunteers to reach the Warrenton road. But the troops were rapidly reaching that condition when it escapes the power of man to hold them: there was running through them that mysterious terror which the Greeks ascribed to the presence of Pan.

"The retreat," says McDowell, "soon became a rout, and this presently degenerated into a panic." The troops fled across Bull Run; and once on the road, the different bodies coming together, and without officers, became intermingled, and all organization was lost; while army trains and artillery blocking the road, produced a hideous *délâ·le*. At the same time, Colonel Miles, who commanded the division of reserves, and to whom was intrusted the duty of holding the Centreville ridge from Centreville up to Blackburn's Ford, withdrew his troops from these positions, uncovering the passage of the stream to the Confederates, and exposing the whole retreating mass to capture or destruction,—a fate which was averted by the arrival of General McDowell, who ordered back Miles' troops to their position, and by the inactivity of the Confederates. Nothing like systematic pursuit was made, although a small party of cavalry followed the retreat as far as Cub Run. By sundown, most of the army was safe behind the Centreville ridge. There was, however, no question of halting there; for the condition of the army and the absence of supplies left no alternative but to fall back; and during the night the army made its way to the Potomac. The retreat was marked by great disorder, all semblance of military organization being lost. Many did not even stop on reaching the camps south of the Potomac, but fled by the bridges and ferries to Washington. This, however, was at length stopped by Colonel Sherman, who posted strong guards at the points of passage.

The Confederate loss in this action was 1852, of whom 269 were killed and 1438 wounded. The Union loss must have been nealry 4000; the prisoners, well and wounded, left in Beauregard's hands, numbered 1460.

It is hardly necessary to seek any explanation of the events of Bull Run, other than what arises from the consideration of the simple fact that the battle was fought at all. McDowell's plan of battle was well-considered, and even bold; but the faults of execution were innumerable. Owing to the absence of any thing like a staff, the attack was made in a most fragmentary way, without order or *ensemble*. Since the close of the war, the writer of these pages has had with General Johnston a very full conversation on this action; and on the question of the general management of the battle of Manassas, he spoke as follows: "The key-point was a flat, bare crest. It was here that the Federals made their attacks. But they were made by a brigade at a time. The position was really hardly tenable, and had an attack been made in force, with double line of battle—such as any major-general in the United States service would now make—we could not have held it half an hour, for they would have enveloped us on both flanks."

So far as regards the mere physical fact of *fighting*, which was at the time the all-important question, there was nothing of which the Union soldiers had to be ashamed—they stood up to it with the blood of their race. The fault lay in the inherently vicious organization of the force—in the great number of miserable subordinate officers, which in turn was the natural result of the method of raising regiments. Yet, with all the faults, the action was for a time almost a success, which shows that the Confederates were really in not much better condition. Their chief point of advantage was in the better class of officers created by their system. Nevertheless, the victory long hung in the balance, and might readily have declared itself on either side.* At the close of the action, the

* General Jordan, chief of staff to Beauregard, informs me that while conducting Jefferson Davis up to the battle-ground from Manassas Junction during the progress of the action, and just a short time before the giving way of the Union lines, such were the streams of stragglers and skulkers pouring to the Southern rear, that Mr. Davis fancied Beauregard had been completely beaten. Observing the fact that each even slightly wounded man was a

Southerners were hardly less demoralized than their opponents, so that the idea of pursuit was not to be entertained. On this point, again, the testimony of General Johnston is of the highest value. "In our condition," said he, "pursuit could not be thought of; for we were almost as much disorganized by our victory as the Federals by their defeat. Next day, many, supposing the war was over, actually went home. A party of our soldiers, hearing that a friend lay wounded twenty miles off, would start out to go and see him; or that another acquaintance was dead, and they would go and bury him. Our men had in a larger degree the instinct of personal liberty than those of the North; and it was found very difficult to subordinate their personal will to the needs of military discipline." *

Both sides, in fact, had much to learn; and it is the fact that the battle of Bull Run was the first great lesson which the two armies received, that makes the events which transpired on the plains of Manassas that July Sunday, forever memorable in the history of the War.

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corted by two or three comrades, Mr. Davis exclaimed to Jordan, "Battles are not won where several unhurt men are seen carrying off each wounded soldier!"

* General Johnston in his official report says: "The war department has already been informed of all the causes that prevented pursuit, *some of which only are proper to be communicated.*" I suppose, what is stated above, which I had from General Johnston's own lips, supplies the rest.

III.

THE ARMY BEFORE WASHINGTON.

JULY, 1861—MARCH, 1862.

I.

ORGANIZATION OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.

WHEN the army that so lately had gone forth with such high hopes returned from Manassas shattered and discomfited to the banks of the Potomac, wise men saw there was that had suffered worse defeat than the army—it was the *system* under which Bull Run had been fought and lost. The lesson was a severe one; but if it was needed to demonstrate the legitimate result of the crude experimentalism under which the war had been conducted,—when campaigns were planned by ignorant politicians, and battles, precipitated by the pressure of sanguine journalists, were fought by raw three months' levies,—the price paid was perhaps not too high. The Bull Run experiment taught the country it was a real war it had undertaken, and that success could only be hoped for by a strict conformity to military principles.

The spirit in which the country rose to meet the emergency showed that it had benefited by the experience; and if before Bull Run the public mind had been in a mood to require just such a stern lesson for reproof and correction and instruction, it soon appeared that there was in it a temper to rise above the worst lapses and failures. For then was seen that which again and again throughout the war has been seen—a spectacle

Geo B McClellan

marvellous and majestic, when the nation, stirred to its depths, uprose to meet the crisis that was upon it. Something of the kind had been seen at the uprising that followed the assault on Fort Sumter. But that was a manifestation less deep and earnest than the swift, stern, almost savage vigor with which the men of the North, wounded in the instinct of self-love as well as in the sentiment of patriotism, arose to assert their manhood, impugned by the humiliations of Bull Run. The crisis was one fitted to test the mettle of the nation; for had it then shown the least supineness or hesitation, its doom had been sealed. In a fortnight the terms of service of the seventy-five thousand volunteers would have expired; and the Southern army, flushed with victory and doubled in material strength, would have found the capital of the United States an easy prey.

The nation sprang spontaneously to arms. With incredible rapidity new battalions were formed and forwarded to Washington; and by the time the term of service of the provisional troops had expired, their number had been more than replaced by fresh levies enlisted for three years or the war.

What the country could give—men, material, money—that it gave lavishly, far outrunning the calls of the Government; but what it could not give was precisely what was most urgently needed to vitalize these sinews of war,—to wit, adequate leadership, and that soul of armies, the mind of a great commander. For this the nation, keenly alive to its need, could only breathe passionate aspirations.

General McDowell vacated the command of the army without forfeiting the respect of his countrymen; for, while he had lost a battle, there was an instinctive consciousness that he had been the victim of circumstances rather than of any miscarriage of his own. And now there could be no doubt regarding his successor; for the general and consenting voice of the North pointed to the young general who had just concluded his campaign in the mountains of West Virginia as the desired leader of the army. General McClellan, accordingly, was summoned to Washington the day after Bull Run.

and placed in command of the disorganized forces that had returned from that untoward campaign, and of the rapidly arriving regiments which the "populous North" was pouring down from all directions to Washington. Out of these elements, an army was, first of all, to be fashioned.

General McClellan brought to his high trust proofs of talent which, though not sufficient to show him a proper captain of a great army, were yet enough to inspire the best hopes of him. He had served with distinction in Mexico, had studied war in Europe, was in the flower of his youth, and, above all, had just finished a campaign that, by its success amidst general failure elsewhere, seemed to furnish at once the prestige and prophecy of victory.

The young chieftain threw himself with the utmost ardor and energy into the work of moulding into form an army adequate for the nation's needs. It was a colossal task; for it was necessary not merely to build up an army, but to make the model on which the army should be built. The military traditions of the United States, confined to the single campaign in Mexico, afforded no groundwork for the organization of such a military establishment as was now demanded for the portentous task before the country. The regular army kept on foot previous to the war was limited by law to under twenty thousand men. But its whole internal organism had been disrupted by secession, and it did not even form a *cadre* on which it was possible to build.

The force around Washington, of which General McClellan assumed command on the 27th of July, numbered about fifty thousand infantry, less than a thousand cavalry, six hundred and fifty artillerymen, with nine imperfect field-batteries of thirty pieces. It still retained the provisional brigade-organization given it by McDowell; but the utter collapse that followed Bull Run had made it rather a mob than an army. Desertions had become alarmingly numerous, and the streets of Washington were crowded with straggling officers and men absent from their stations without authority, and indicating by their behavior an utter want of discipline and organiza-

tion.* To correct these abuses a stringent system of military police was at once adopted, and this measure was followed by an immediate improvement in the *morale* of the troops. The root of the evil, however, lay deeper—lay in the really vicious system governing the primary organization of regiments and the appointment of their officers.† Though General McClellan was unable to strike at this, he endeavored, as far as might be, to remedy its results; and Congress having passed a bill authorizing the President to dispense with the services of inefficient officers, the Army of the Potomac was soon weeded of several hundred worthless wearers of shoulder-straps.‡

The problem of the best organization to be given a newly formed army, is one that to this day has received no final solution; and whatever principle be adopted, the original organization will be apt to require modification very soon after entering upon a campaign. The *division*, composed of two or more brigades, is, however, a permanent unit: and General McClellan, after the regiments had been

* McClellan: Report, p. 9.

† Prince de Joinville: The Army of the Potomac, p. 17; Lecomte: Guerre des Etats-Unis, p. 55.

In just views regarding this, as regarding most other matters relating to the war, the people were much in advance of the Government; and one of the most curious instances of this is a formal memorial at this time addressed to the President by "property holders of New York," regarding the system of officering regiments. This paper, marked by the soundest good sense, was published in the New York journals of August 1, 1861. "They complain," says the memorial, "that a suitable supervision has not been extended by Government to the officering of the volunteer forces; that the principle of allowing companies to choose their own officers, or officers their own colonels, is fatal to military discipline: that political, local, and personal interests have had far too much sway in the selection of officers; that undue laxity prevails in the control of volunteer officers by their military superiors; and that an ill-grounded apprehension of local or political censure has prevented the proper authorities from removing incompetent commanders, and from placing in responsible military positions those most capable of filling them, without regard to any thing but their qualifications," etc., etc.

‡ After the institution of the qualifying examination, three hundred and ten officers were dismissed, or their resignations accepted, within eight months.

organized into brigades of four regiments each, and the brigades had been somewhat disciplined and instructed, formed divisions of three brigades each.* But, in armies of above sixty thousand men, it has been common, since the time of Napoleon, to create from the assemblage of two or more divisions the higher unit of the *corps d'armée*. As a theoretical principle of organization, General McClellan was in favor of the formation of corps; but he wished to defer its practical application until his division commanders should, by actual experience in the field, acquire the requisite training to fit them for commands so important, and until he should have learned who of his divisional officers merited this high trust.† There was much to justify this course, for there are few men able to command a body of thirty thousand men;‡ and it is worthy of note that it was not till the Army of Northern Virginia had seen eighteen months of service that those at the head of military affairs in Richmond organized corps.§ This hesitation, however, proved unfortunate for McClellan himself; for, several months afterwards, and just as he was about moving to the Peninsula, the President divided the Army of the Potomac into four corps, and assigned to their command men whom General McClellan would not have chosen; whereas, had he created corps at first, he might have made his own selection.‖

It next became necessary to create adequate artillery and engineer establishments, to organize the cavalry arm, and to

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* McClellan: Report, p. 11.

† Ibid., p. 53.

‡ "An *army corps* rarely contains more than thirty thousand men, and often lower, even among nations who have the greatest number of troops. Such a command is a great burden, and few men are capable of managing it creditably." Dufour: Strategy and Tactics, p. 81.

§ The corps organization was created in the Confederate service immediately after the battle of Antietam.

‖ General Hooker cannot be regarded as a partisan of General McClellan, yet I have often heard him say that it would have been impossible for General McClellan to have succeeded with such corps commanders as he had on the Peninsula.

provide for the administrative service of the quartermaster, ordnance, commissary, and medical departments.

The task of forming an artillery establishment was facilitated by the fact that the country possessed in the regular service a body of accomplished and energetic artillery officers.* As basis of organization it was decided to form field-batteries of six guns (never less than four guns, and the guns of each battery to be of uniform calibre);† and these were assigned to divisions, not to brigades, in the proportion of four batteries to each division; one of which was to be a battery of Regulars, and the captain of the Regular battery was in each case appointed commandant of the artillery of the division. In addition, it was determined to create an artillery reserve of a hundred guns and a siege-train of fifty pieces. This work was pushed forward with so much energy, that whereas, when General McClellan took command of the army, the entire artillery establishment consisted of nine imperfectly equipped batteries of thirty guns, before it took the field this service had reached the colossal proportions of ninety-two batteries of five hundred and twenty guns, served by twelve thousand five hundred men, and in full readiness for active field-duty.‡

With equal energy the formation of the engineer establishment was entered upon; and this included not only the training of engineer companies and the Corps of Topographical Engineers, but the organization of engineer and bridge-trains and equipage adequate for an army of first-class proportions. At the same time, the entire system of the defences of Washington, both for the northern and southern side of the Po-

* The duty of organizing this arm was confided to Major (afterwards Brigadier-General) Barry, chief of artillery.

† "It was decided that the proportion of rifled guns should be one-third, and of smooth-bores two-thirds—that the rifled guns should be restricted to the system of the United States ordnance department and of Parrott, and the smooth-bores to be exclusively the light twelve-pounder or Napoleon gun."—Barry: Report of Artillery Operations, p. 106.

‡ Report of the Engineer and Artillery Operations of the Army of the Potomac, pp. 106–109.

tomac, was planned and carried into execution.* Washington, in fact, assumed the aspect of a fortified capital, with a system of defences so formidable that the enemy at no time throughout the war attempted seriously to assail that city †

Such is but a faint setting forth of the manifold activities evoked and directed towards the creation of the Army of the Potomac by its new commander. It was a season of faithful, fruitful work, amid which that army grew into shape and substance. And with such surprising energy was the work of organization pushed forward, that whereas General McClellan in July came into command of a collection of raw, dispirited, and disorganized regiments, without commissariat or quartermaster departments, and unfitted either to march or fight, he had around him at the end of three months a hundred thousand men, trained and disciplined, organized and equipped, animated by the highest spirit, and deserving the fond name of THE GRAND ARMY OF THE POTOMAC. And certainly, if there are portions of McClellan's subsequent military career that are open to animadversion, he yet challenges from all impartial minds the credit due this mighty performance.‡

Looking at the work he then initiated, in the only light in which we can rightly appreciate it—as it stands related to

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* These works were planned and executed by Major (afterwards Major-General) Barnard, chief-engineer of the Army of the Potomac.

† The theory of the system of defences of Washington is that upon which the works of Torres Vedras were based—the occupation of commanding points within cannon-range of each other by field-forts, the fire of which shall sweep all the approaches, a connection being formed by infantry parapets easily improvised. The line, as it encircles the capital on both sides of the Potomac, has a development of thirty-three miles. As to the value of this system of defences for the safeguard of Washington, that is a vast, complex, and difficult question, not to be entered on here. It has been very severely criticised by Colonel Lecomte in his work, "Campagne de Virginie et de Maryland en 1862;" and to these animadversions a warm rejoinder has been made by General Barnard in "The Peninsular Campaign and its Antecedents."

‡ History will not refuse to affirm of this work the judgment pronounced by General McClellan himself: "The creation of such an army in so short a time from nothing, will hereafter be regarded as one of the highest glories of the administration and the nation."

what went before, and what came after it—it is manifest that what gives it significance is that it represents science displacing sciolism, the untutored enthusiasm of a nation unused to war, taught by a bitter experience to yield itself to the cunning hand of discipline—that power which Carnot calls "the glory of the soldier and the strength of armies."* If the Army of the Potomac afterwards performed deeds worthy to live in history, it is in no small degree due to the fact that the groundwork of victory was laid deep and broad in that early period of stern tutelage, when it learnt the apprenticeship of war. If other generals, the successors of McClellan, were able to achieve more decisive results than he, it was, again, in no small degree, because they had ready to hand the perfect instrument which he had fashioned.†

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* "It is military discipline that is the glory of the soldier and the strength of armies, for it is the foremost act of its devotion, and the most assured pledge of victory (*le plus grand acte de son dévouement et le gage le plus assuré de la victoire*). It is by it that all wills unite in one, and all partial forces conspire to wards one end." Carnot: De la Défense des Places Fortes, p. 505.

† "Had there been no McClellan," I have often heard General Meade say, "there could have been no Grant; for the army made no essential improvement under any of his successors." It was common throughout the war to ascribe a high degree of discipline to the Confederate army—even higher than that of the Army of the Potomac. But the revelations of the actual condition of that army since the close of the war do not justify this assertion. On the contrary, they show that the discipline of the Army of Northern Virginia was never equal to that of the Army of the Potomac, though in fire and *elan* it was superior. "I could always rely on my army," said General Lee, at the time he surrendered its remnant at Appomattox Courthouse—"I could always rely on my army for *fighting;* but its discipline was poor." At the time of the Maryland invasion, Lee lost above twenty-five thousand men from his effective strength by straggling, and he exclaimed with tears, "*My army is ruined by straggling!*" Nothing could better illustrate the high state of discipline of the Army of the Potomac, than its conduct in such retreats as that on the Peninsula and in the Pope campaign, and in such incessant fighting as the Rapidan campaign of 1864.

II.

PLANS OF CAMPAIGNS.

THREE months of varied and fruitful activity thus passed, and the close of autumn found around Washington an army both formidable in numbers and respectable in efficiency. There then arose the problem of putting it in motion; and this problem involved two questions—*when* to strike, and *where?* The latter was a question that concerned the general-in-chief; but the former was one that profoundly touched the people, who, as the sustainers of the war, "thronged in and made their voice heard, and became partakers of the counsels of state."*

During that period in which the army was being formed public remained silent. And there was in this silence something almost pathetic; for, knowing that an undue urgency for action, expressed through the public prints, had precipitated the disastrous campaign that ended in Bull Run, men sought to make amends by a sedulous refraining from the like again. General McClellan was left free to work his will; and, being strong in the trust of the country, he was "master of the situation:" no monarch could be more so.

Yet it was manifest that this confidence was in pledge of early and energetic action on the part of the commander; for the country had too much at stake, and the passions and interests of men were too closely bound up with a speedy suppression of the insurrection, to brook a Fabian policy. General McClellan had, in a public speech at the time he assumed command of the Army of the Potomac, promised that the war should be "short, sharp, and decisive." This

* This is the striking expression employed by Mr. Kinglake in describing the influence of English public sentiment in enforcing the War of the Crimea.

was the very key-note on which all the motions of public sentiment turned. It was, therefore, in the highest degree important for him to seize the first opportunity to justify, by some palpable proof, that confidence which the country had spontaneously extended to him. There was too little moderation, too little stability in the public judgment, to make it possible that this condition of things should long continue. The faith that had been freely bestowed would presently disappear, unless confirmed by deeds.

A commander who, under a popular government, is intrusted with the conduct of a war, has to shape his acts not alone according to abstract military dictates, but must take into account considerations of a political and moral order as well. For the wishes, impulses, prejudices, ignorances even of his countrymen, enter as really into the problem with which he has to deal as the character of his enemy or the lines of military operation. A captain who is also king, may act in quite different wise from a captain responsible to a Cabinet or Congress. What a Cæsar or a Napoleon might do, could not be imitated by a Wellington or a Eugene; and the history of the latter illustrious commander, and his equally illustrious colleague—Marlborough—shows, strikingly, how that even the victor of Blenheim and Ramilies had to conform the inspirations of his military genius to the dull wits of a Dutch States-General. McClellan, who had as yet done nothing to prove himself either a Wellington or a Eugene, should have made the lightest possible draft on the indulgence of the people.

There is little or no doubt that, thus far, General McClellan had formed no other theory regarding the employment of the Army of the Potomac, than that which was common throughout the country; which, compendiously stated, was to make a direct attack on the enemy in front of Washington, and to make this attack as soon as possible.*

* Though General McClellan used to keep his own counsel, yet General McDowell tells me he was wont, in their rides over the country south of the Potomac, to point out towards the flank of Manassas and say, "*We shall strike them there.*"

All his plans at this period contemplated a general advance from Washington as early as the month of November; and, looking back to the middle of October, it appears from General McClellan's own statement that he had at that time upwards of one hundred and fifty thousand men under his command, out of which, after deducting the forces to be employed in garrisoning Washington, Baltimore, and Annapolis, and those assigned for guarding the line of the Potomac, he was able to place in the field a column for active operations of above seventy-five thousand men.*

But about the time he had designed putting the army in motion, General McClellan found himself, by his appointment as general-in-chief, charged not only with the direction of the Army of the Potomac but of all the other armies in the field. He then began to change his views regarding the line and method of operating against the enemy in Virginia; and this led him to the adoption of a policy that caused a delay of all active operations, lasting throughout the whole winter and continuing till March, 1862, when the movement to the Peninsula was begun.† This inactivity, by

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* McClellan: Report, p. 7.

† It would appear that it was during the month of November that General McClellan first began to change his purpose of operating against the enemy in front of Washington, and determined to assail Richmond from the coast. The earliest recorded intimation of this change of purpose appears in a reply by General McClellan to a memorandum drawn up by President Lincoln, suggesting a movement on Manassas. This paper, with many others relating to his own personal correspondence with General McClellan, was given the writer by the late President during the summer of 1864. It is marked in Mr. Lincoln's hand as having been made "about the 1st of December, 1861."

"If it were determined to make a forward movement of the Army of the Potomac, without awaiting further increase of numbers, or better drill and discipline, how *long* would it require to actually get in motion?

"[Answer in pencil by McClellan: 'If bridge trains ready, by December 15—probably 25th.']

"After leaving all that would be necessary, how many troops could join the movement from southwest of the river?

"[Answer in pencil, '71,000.']

"How many from northwest of it?

whatever military considerations it may have been justified to General McClellan's own mind, was certainly very unfortunate; and, as it had afterwards an important bearing on that commander's relations to the Administration, and has since given rise to much antagonism of opinion, it will be proper to consider briefly both the reasons which are thought to justify and those which are thought to condemn it.

The points of defence of the inactivity of the Army of the Potomac during the winter of 1861–2 may all be included in this summary: the yet imperfect organization, equipment,

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"[Answer in pencil, '33,000.']

"Suppose, then, that of those southwest of the river [supplied in pencil, '50,000'] move forward and menace the enemy at Centreville?

"The remainder of the movable force on that side move rapidly to the crossing of the Occoquan by the road from Alexandria towards Richmond; there to be joined by the whole movable force from northeast of the river, having landed from the Potomac just below the mouth of the Occoquan, move by land up the south side of that stream, to the crossing point named; then the whole move together, by the road thence to Brentville, and beyond, to the railroad just south of its crossing of Broad Run, a strong detachment of cavalry having gone rapidly ahead to destroy the railroad-bridges south and north of the point.

"If the crossing of the Occoquan by those from above be resisted, those landing from the Potomac below to take the resisting force of the enemy in rear; or, if landing from the Potomac be resisted, those crossing the Occoquan from above to take that resisting force in rear. Both points will probably not be successfully resisted at the same time. The force in front of Centreville, if pressed too hardly, should fight back into the intrenchments behind them. Armed vessels and transports should remain at the Potomac landing to cover a possible retreat."

The following reply is in General McClellan's handwriting, dated Washington, December 10, and marked "*confidential:*"

"I inclose the paper you left with me—filled as you requested. In arriving at the numbers given, I have left the minimum numbers in garrison and observation.

"Information recently [received] leads me to believe that the enemy would meet us in front with equal forces nearly—*and I have now my mind actually turned towards another plan of campaign that I do not think at all anticipated by the enemy, nor by many of our own people.*

"GEORGE B. MCCLELLAN."

The "other plan of campaign," here foreshadowed, is of course no other than the coast movement.

and discipline of the army; the inadequacy of its force; the difficulty of winter campaigning in Virginia; and the necessity of a simultaneous movement throughout the entire theatre of war. Some of these points are well taken, while others will not stand a critical examination.

It is true that the army, though composed of material of uncommon excellence, was necessarily green and had the imperfections incident to improvised armaments; and, no doubt, it was in much better condition to move in April, 1862, than it could have been in November or December, 1861. But, assuredly, General McClellan over-estimates the then condition of his opponent's army, when, in his report, he speaks of its superior discipline, drill, and equipment. There is now overwhelming evidence to show that, previously at least to the organization of the permanent Confederate Army in April, 1862, nothing could exceed the laxity of discipline, demoralization of temper, and inferiority in arms, equipment, and means of transport that marked the Southern force. It is true, also, that General McClellan was never able to obtain quite the colossal force he had called for—a movable column of one hundred and fifty thousand men, together with garrisons for Washington, Baltimore, etc., and corps of observation for the line of the Potomac, making the enormous aggregate of two hundred and forty thousand men. But it should be considered that this demand was based on the theory set forth by General McClellan himself, that the enemy had, in October, "a force on the Potomac not less than one hundred and fifty thousand strong, well drilled and equipped;" whereas it is certain that General Johnston's entire force barely exceeded one-third that number.*

* Several months ago General Johnston stated verbally to me that his recollection of the maximum of his strength during this period was 54,000. Since then, however, I have obtained in manuscript the consolidated monthly reports of the Confederate armies. Johnston's strength, October 31, 1861, was 44,131 present for duty (present and absent 66,243); December 31st it was 62,112 present for duty (present and absent 98,088); February 28, 1862, it was 47,617 (present and absent 84,225).

It is also true that military operations in a Virginia winter and on a Virginia soil are attended with great difficulties; and no military student will, after the experience of the war, say that it would have been practicable for General McClellan at that season to undertake a grand operation, such as a campaign against Richmond. But it was quite possible to have made a special operation of the nature of a movement against Johnston at Manassas. Had Johnston stood, a battle with good prospect of success might have been delivered. But had he, as there was great likelihood he would do, and as it is now certain he would have done, fallen back from Manassas to the line of the Rapidan, his compulsory retirement would have been esteemed a positive victory to the Union arms.* And, even had it been accounted impracticable to undertake a movement against Manassas, there were still many incidental

* General McClellan himself, in discussing the relative merits of a direct advance against the enemy at Manassas and a change of base to some point on the lower Chesapeake, makes certain admissions that, considering the circumstances of the case, might well have decided him to take the former course. He admits that an attack on the Confederate right flank by the line of the Occoquan would, if successful, "prevent the junction of the enemy's right with his centre," affording the opportunity of destroying the former; would "remove the obstructions to the navigation of the Potomac;" would "reduce the length of wagon transportation," and would "strike directly at his main railway communication." Now assuming the successful execution of this plan, what would have been the result? General McClellan himself shall answer:

"Assuming the success of this operation and the defeat of the enemy as certain, the question at once arises as to the importance of the results gained. I think these results would be confined to the possession of the field of battle, the evacuation of the line of the upper Potomac by the enemy, and the moral effect of the victory; important results, it is true, but not decisive of the war, nor securing the destruction of the enemy's main army, for he could fall back upon other positions, and fight us again and again, should the condition of his troops permit."

A tactical victory in the field, the compulsory retreat of the enemy from his cherished position, the relief of the blockade of the Potomac, and the "moral effect of the victory," with the losses, disasters, and demoralization therefrom resulting all of which General McClellan admits were within his grasp by the movement indicated—were surely well worth the effort. True, the operation would not have been "decisive of the war,"—for such was the grand but somewhat vague and, as has since appeared, misjudged ambition that possessed him.

operations* that were perfectly feasible, and which, while valuable in themselves, would have had the effect to satisfy the country and consolidate the confidence of the people and the Administration in General McClellan.

And it is precisely in this regard that General McClellan showed himself deficient in certain qualities of mind indispensable for one who has to deal with the larger questions of war. If, as a soldier, he was right in wishing to postpone grand military operations till spring, when the times and seasons and circumstances should all favor; when his army, strengthened in numbers and tempered by discipline, would be fit for the field; when the full preparation of the other armies would enable him to enter on large combinations, he certainly showed a lack of that kind of political *savoir faire* and knowledge of human nature necessary to a great commander, in remaining perfectly inactive. It was for him to consider whether the increase in numbers and improvement in discipline likely to accrue to his army in the mean time would at all compensate for that loss of confidence, that popular impatience, that political obstruction, which were certain to arise, and which actually did arise. For so soon as the period of reorganization had passed, the public and the Administration became naturally anxious to see the imposing army of a hundred and fifty thousand men that had grown up on the banks of the Potomac turned to some account. And this anxiety presently grew into an impatience, which at length broke out in loud clamor that at once embarrassed the Government and marred the harmonious relations between it and the commander of the army.

It happened, too, that during this period there occurred a series of untoward events that made a deep impression on the people of the North, and tended both to grieve patriotic men and stir up a bitter opposition to the commander held responsible for them. The most important of these were the

* Among these General Barnard mentions the capture of Norfolk. The Peninsular Campaign, p. 12.

blockade of the Potomac and the disaster at Ball's Bluff, of which events I must give a brief account.

Shortly after the battle of Bull Run, the Confederates advanced their outposts from Centreville and Fairfax Court-house forward as far as Munson's Hill, and almost to the banks of the Potomac,—a move that was of no military value, but which gave them the prestige of flaunting their flag within view of the capitol of the nation. They then proceeded to erect batteries at different points on the Virginia side of the Potomac, with the view of obstructing the navigation of the river. So successfully was this work performed, that early in October the flag-officer of the Potomac flotilla officially reported the water highway by which a large part of the supplies for the army around Washington was brought forward from the North to be effectually closed.* This event, the actual blockade of the capital, produced throughout the country a deep feeling of mortification and humiliation, and called forth bitter complaints against the Government. A proposition was made to destroy these batteries by an assaulting force sent from the Maryland side of the river; but the enterprise was abandoned in consequence of an adverse report from General Barnard, chief-engineer.† Meanwhile, the commander was unwilling to undertake the destruction of the batteries by the only method that promised success—to wit, a movement by the right bank of the Potomac,—for the reason that it would bring on a general engagement.

The affair of Ball's Bluff was of a kind to affect still more powerfully the popular imagination; for, while in itself a lamentable disaster, it seemed to reveal a strange looseness and want of responsibility in the conduct of military affairs. It appears that on the 19th of October, General McCall was ordered to make, with his division, a movement on Drainesville, for the purpose of covering reconnoissances in all directions to be made the following day. These reconnoissances

* Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 8.

† McClellan: Report, p. 50.

were successfully accomplished on the 20th; and General McClellan, anticipating that this demonstration would have the effect of inducing the enemy to abandon Leesburg, directed General Stone, whose division of observation was guarding the left bank of the Potomac above Washington, with headquarters at Poolesville, to "keep a good lookout upon Leesburg," and suggested "a slight demonstration" as likely to have the effect of moving the enemy at that point. Accordingly, on the afternoon of the 20th, Gorman's brigade was sent to Edward's Ferry to make a display of force, and the Fifteenth Massachusetts regiment, under Colonel Devens, was sent to Harrison's Island, from which place a small scouting party was about dark sent across by Ball's Bluff, to the Virginia side, and ordered to push out towards Leesburg and report the position of the enemy. The reconnoitring party having returned, bringing report of a small encampment of the enemy within a mile of Leesburg, Colonel Devens was ordered by General Stone to cross five companies of his regiment to the Virginia shore, and advancing under cover of the night to the enemy's camp, to destroy it at daybreak, and, after making observation of the country, to return. The report touching the enemy's encampment proved to be a mistake; but Colonel Devens found a wood in which he concealed his men, and proceeded to examine the space between that and Leesburg. About eight o'clock, however, finding his position discovered, he retired to the Bluff, but presently returned towards Leesburg, and occupied the ground till towards one o'clock; when on being attacked by a regiment of the enemy, he again fell back to a field in front of the bluff, where the main action afterwards took place, and where was posted a small supporting force under Colonel Lee. Meantime, in the morning, General Stone had assigned to Colonel Baker the command of the right wing at Ball's Bluff, giving him a discretionary order either to retire the small force on the Virginia side, or to re-enforce it from his own brigade. Colonel Baker determined on the latter course, and succeeded in ferrying over about a thousand men of his command. These

he united to the commands of Colonel Devens, who had meanwhile retired to the bluff, and of Colonel Lee; and with this force of about one thousand eight hundred men formed line of battle in the field at the top of the bluff, where, about half-past two in the afternoon, he began to receive the attack of the enemy. The Southern force was composed of four regiments, under command of Colonel Evans, who with his brigade had been holding post at Leesburg. Finding that the small Union force, which had been easily driven back from its advance towards Leesburg, was constantly being re-enforced by the fresh troops which Baker was bringing across the river, Evans ordered a general attack. The action continued for two hours; the Confederates assaulting impetuously, and the Union force stoutly resisting, though losing ground. In the midst of the contest the commanding officer, Colonel Baker, was killed; and shortly afterwards the line, receiving a severe fire on the left flank, retreated in disorder down the bluff towards the river. Here, towards dusk, an appalling scene ensued. The troops swarmed down the steep bluff, pursued by the yelling Southerners, who shot and bayoneted them as they ran. The means of transportation had been very inadequate; the one flat-boat was soon swamped, the lifeboat drifted down the stream, and the couple of skiffs which made up the total were soon lost. Many were shot while in the water; many were drowned; many surrendered; others succeeded in swimming to the island. Not half of those who went over returned.

This lamentable affair discouraged the people of the North as much as it elated the Southerners.* Its entire history affords a striking exemplification of the looseness of military conduct and relations at that time. In venturing on the undertaking, General Stone proceeded on the supposition that General McCall, who, as General McClellan informed him,

* In the hot and suspicious temper of the hour, the gravest charges were brought against the commanding officer, who some time afterwards was placed in arrest and confined to Fort Lafayette. From these charges a calmer survey of the events completely exonerates General Stone.

had occupied Drainesville on the 20th, and was to "send out reconnoissances in all directions," still remained there; yet McCall was withdrawn the following morning, when Stone sent the force across the river, without the latter's being informed of the fact. Again, though General McClellan did not *order* the expedition across the river, yet on being informed of the crossing during the day, he congratulated General Stone, thereby inferentially approving it.* Stone's plan of operations lacked definite purpose: it was neither a feint nor a serious attack. He seems to have left Colonel Baker in misunderstanding as to the co-operation of the force at Edward's Ferry; and the conduct of Colonel Baker,—a high-spirited and patriotic man, who had quitted his seat in the United States Senate to take the field,—was without military skill or discretion.

These events could not fail to have a deeply depressing effect on the public mind. It is vain to argue that the country should have subordinated its wishes to abstract military necessities. Nor is it strange, as month after month passed by in inaction, with the capital of the nation under blockade, the foreign relations of the United States menacing war, Secession gaining prestige day by day, while an army of portentous strength lay as under a spell, that the deepest solicitude should have overcome the hearts of men; that the timid should have begun to despair, and the proudest to hang their heads with shame. These things came back upon the Administration in a pressure daily growing more and more oppressive; and when, towards the close of that gloomy year, the commander of the Army of the Potomac being then sick, President Lincoln called in several of the general officers to counsel with him, he declared, in his sad, homely way, that "if something could not soon be done, the *bottom would be out of the whole affair*. †

This exposition of the condition of the public mind is due

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* Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. ii., p. 489.

† McDowell: Manuscript Minutes of Council of War.

here; because, if we shall not be able to hold the Administration blameless in its dealings with General McClellan, a just verdict will at the same time not omit to estimate how severe a demand that officer—unwisely, as we must think—made on the country and the Government.

I now pass to the exposition of the cause that produced this long and unfortunate inaction, and which will be found in the already noted change of the plan of operations. There is little doubt that, at the period to which this recital has extended—namely, the close of the year 1861—General McClellan had fully resolved upon acting against the enemy by a flank movement by water instead of assailing him by direct attack; and as the adoption of the former course had a most important bearing on the relations between the Executive and the general-in-chief, I shall enter with some detail into the origin and development of that plan of campaign that removed the Army of the Potomac from the front of Washington to the Peninsula.

The first formal discussion of a movement to the Lower Chesapeake seems to have taken place at a series of war-councils held at Washington early in January, 1862. It appears that at this time President Lincoln, troubled in spirit at the condition of public affairs, and further distressed at the sickness of General McClellan, summoned the attendance of two division commanders, to counsel with himself and the members of the cabinet as to the propriety of commencing active operations with the Army of the Potomac. These officers were Generals McDowell and Franklin. The former officer committed to writing the substance of what passed at these interviews, and the following is a transcript of his manuscript minutes:

"JANUARY 10, 1862.—At dinner at Arlington, Va. Received a note from the Assistant-Secretary of War, saying the President wished to see me that evening, at eight o'clock, if I could safely leave my post. Soon after I received a note from Quartermaster-General Meigs, marked 'private and confidential,' saying the President wished to see me.

"Repaired to the President's house at eight o'clock P. M. Found the President alone. Was taken into the small room in the northeast corner. Soon after we were joined by Brigadier-General Franklin, the Secretary of State, Governor Seward, the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Assistant-Secretary of War. The President was greatly disturbed at the state of affairs. Spoke of the exhausted condition of the treasury; of the loss of public credit; of the Jacobinism of Congress;* of the delicate condition of our foreign relations; of the bad news he had received from the West, particularly as contained in a letter from General Halleck on the state of affairs in Missouri; of the want of co-operation between Generals Halleck and Buell; but more than all, the sickness of General McClellan.

"The President said he was in great distress, and as he had been to General McClellan's house, and the general did not ask to see him; and as he must talk to somebody, he had sent for General Franklin and myself to obtain our opinion as to the possibility of soon commencing active operations with the Army of the Potomac.

"To use his own expression, 'If something was not soon done, the bottom would be out of the whole affair; and if General McClellan did not want to use the army, he would like to *borrow it*, provided he could see how it could be made to do something.'

"The Secretary of State stated the substance of some information he considered reliable as to the strength of the forces on the other side, which he had obtained from an Englishman from Fort Monroe, Richmond, Manassas, and Centreville, which was to the effect, that the enemy had twenty thousand men under Huger, at Norfolk; thirty thousand at Centreville; and in all in our front, an effective force, capable of being brought up at short notice, of about one hundred and three thousand men—men not suffering, but well shod, clothed, and fed. In answer to the question from the President, what could soon be done with the army, I replied that the question as to the *when* must be preceded by the one as to the *how* and the *where*. That substantially I would organize the army into four army corps, placing the five divisions on the Washington side on the right bank. Place three of these corps to the front—the right at Vienna or its vicinity, the left beyond Fairfax Station, the centre beyond Fairfax Courthouse, and connect the lat-

* General McDowell's manuscript was submitted by the present writer to President Lincoln, during the summer of 1864, and he indorsed its entire contents as a true report of these war-councils, with the exception of the above phrase, "the Jacobinism of Congress." His autograph indorsement on the manuscript states that he had no recollection of using such an expression. It may be supposed that the phrase expresses the *impression* produced on McDowell's mind by Mr. Lincoln's words, though his precise language may have been different.

ter place with the Orange and Alexandria Railroad by a railroad now partially thrown up. This would enable us to supply these corps without the use of horses, except to distribnte what was brought np by rail, and to act upon the enemy without reference to the bad state of country roads.

"The railroads all lead to the enemy's position; by acting upon them in force, besieging his strongholds if necessary, or getting between them if possible, or making the attempt to do so and pressing his left, I thought we should in the first place cause him to bring up all his forces and mass them on the flank most pressed, the left; and possibly, I thought probably, we should again get them out of their works and bring on a general engagement on favorable terms to us; at all events keeping him fully occupied and harrowed. The Fonrth Corps, in connection with a force of heavy guns afloat, would operate on his right flank beyond the Occoquan, get behind the batteries on the Potomac; take Aquia, which being supported by the Third Corps over the Occoquan it could safely attempt, and then move on the railroad from Manassas to the Rappahannock, having a large cavalry force to destroy bridges. I thought by the use of one hundred and thirty thousand men thus employed, and the great facilities which the railroads gave us, and the compact position we should occupy, we must succeed by repeated blows in crushing out the force in our front, even if it were equal in numbers and strength. The road by the Fairfax Courthouse to Centreville wonld give us the means to bring up siege-mortars and siege materials; and even if we could not accomplish the object immediately, by making the campaign one of positions instead of one of manœuvres, to do so eventually and without risk. That this saving of wagon transportation should be effected at once by connecting the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad with the Alexandria roads, by running a road over the Long Bridge. That when all this could be commenced, I conld better tell when I knew something more definite as to the general condition of the army.

"General Franklin being asked, said he was in ignorance of many things necessary to an opinion on the subject, knowing only as to his own division, which was ready for the field. As to the plan of operations, on being asked by the President if he had ever thought what he would do with this army if he had it, he replied that he had, and that it was his judgment that it should be taken, what could be spared from the duty of protecting the capital, *to York River to operate on Richmond.* The question then came up as to the means at hand of transporting a large part of the army by water. The Assistant Secretary of War said the means had been fully taxed to provide transportation for twelve thousand men. After some further conversation, and in reference to our ignorance of the actual condition of the army, the President wished we should come together the next night at eight o'clock, and that General Franklin and I should meet in the mean time, obtain such further information as we might need, and to do so from the staff of the

headquarters of the Army of the Potomac. Immediate orders were to be given to make the railroad over Long Bridge.

"JANUARY 11.—Held a meeting with General Franklin, in the morning, at the Treasury Building, and discussed the question of the operations which, in our judgment, were best under existing circumstances—as season, present position of the forces, present condition of the country—to be undertaken before going into the matter as to when those operations could be set on foot. I urged that we should now find fortifications in York River which would require a movement in that direction to be preceded by a naval force of heavy guns to clear them out, as well as the works at West Point. That Richmond was now fortified; that we could not hope to carry it by a simple march after a successful engagement; that we should be obliged to take a siege-train with us. That all this would take time, which would be improved by the enemy to mass his forces in our front, and we should find that we had not escaped any of the difficulties we have now before this position; but simply lost time and money to find those difficulties when we should not have so strong a base to operate from, nor so many facilities, nor so large a force as we have here, nor, in proportion, so small a one to overcome. That the war now had got to be one of positions, till we should penetrate the line of the enemy. That to overcome him in front, or cut his communication with the South, would, by its moral as well as physical effect, prostrate the enemy, and enable us to undertake any future operations with ease, and certainty of success; but that in order of time, as of importance, the first thing to be done was to overcome this army in our front, which is beleaguering our capital, blockading the river, and covering us day by day with the reproach of impotence, and lowering us in the eyes of foreign nations, and our people both North and South; and that nothing but what is necessary for this purpose should go elsewhere.

"General Franklin suggested whether Governor Chase, in view of what we were charged to do, might not be at liberty to tell us where General Burnside's expedition had gone? I went and asked him. He told me that, under the circumstances, he felt he ought to do so; and said it was destined for Newbern, N. C., by the way of Hatteras Inlet and Pamlico Sound, to operate on Raleigh or Beaufort, or either of them. That General McClellan had, by direction of the President, acquainted him with his plans, which was to go with a large force of this Army of the Potomac to Urbanna or Tappahannock, on the Rappahannock, and then with his bridge-train move directly to Richmond. On further consultation with General Franklin, it was agreed that our inquiries were to be directed to both cases of going from our present position, and of removing the large part of the force to another base further South. A question was raised by General Franklin, whether in deference to General McClellan we should not inform him of the duty we were ordered to perform. I said the order I received was marked private and

confidential; and as they came from the President, our commander-in-chief, I conceived, as a common superior to General McClellan and both of us, it was for the President to say this, and not us. That I would consult the Secretary of the Treasury, who was at hand, and could tell us what was the rule in the cabinet in such matters. The secretary was of opinion that the matter lay entirely with the President. We went to Colonel Kingsbury, chief of ordnance of the Army of the Potomac, Brigadier-General Van Vliet, chief quartermaster, and Major Shiras, commissary of subsistence, and obtained all the information desired. Met at the President's in the evening at eight o'clock. Present, the same as on the first day, with the addition of the Postmaster-General, Judge Blair, who came in after the meeting had begun the discussion. I read a paper containing both General Franklin's and my own views, General Franklin agreeing with me—in view of time, etc., required to take this army to another base—that operations could best *now* be undertaken from the present base, substantially as proposed. The Postmaster-General opposed the plan, and was for having the army, or as much of it as could be spared, go to York River or Fortress Monroe, either to operate against Richmond, or to Suffolk and cut off Norfolk; that being in his judgment the point (Fortress Monroe or York) from which to make a decisive blow. That the plan of going to the front from this position was Bull Run over again. That it was strategically defective, as was the effort last July. As then, we would have the operations upon exterior lines. That it involved too much risk. That there was not so much difficulty as had been supposed in removing the army down the Chesapeake. That only from the Lower Chesapeake could any thing decisive result against the army at Manassas. That to drive them from their present position, by operating from our present base, would only force them to another behind the one they now occupy, and we should have all our work to do over again. Mr. Seward thought if we only had a victory over them it would answer, whether obtained at Manassas or further south. Governor Chase replied in general terms to Judge Blair, to the effect that the moral power of a victory over the enemy, in his present position, would be as great as one elsewhere, all else equal; and the danger lay in the probability that we should find, after losing time and millions, that we should have as many difficulties to overcome below as we now have above. The President wished to have General Meigs in consultation on the subject of providing water transportation, and desired General Franklin and myself to see him in the morning, and meet again at three o'clock P. M. the next day.

"JANUARY 12.—Met General Franklin at General Meigs'. Conversed with him on the subject of our mission at his own house. I expressed my views to General Meigs, who agreed with me in the main as to concentrating our efforts against the enemy in front by moving against him from our

present position. As to the time in which he could assemble water transportation for thirty thousand men, he thought in about from four to six weeks. Met at the President's. General Meigs mentioned the time in which he could assemble the transports as a month to six weeks. The general subject of operations from the present base was again discussed, General Meigs agreeing that it was best to do so, and to concentrate our forces for the purpose. The President and Mr. Seward said that General McClellan had been out to see the President, and was looking quite well, and that now, as he was able to assume the charge of the army, the President would drop any further proceedings with us. The general drift of the conversation was as to the propriety of moving the army further south, and as to the destination of Burnside's expedition. The Postmaster-General said that if it was the intention to fight it out here (Manassas), then we ought to *concentrate*. It was suggested and urged somewhat on the President to countermand, or have General McClellan countermand General Burnside's expedition, and bring up at Aquia. The President was, however, exceedingly averse from interfering, saying he disliked exceedingly to stop a thing long since planned, just as it was ready to strike. Nothing was done but to appoint another meeting the next day, at eleven o'clock, when we were to meet General McClellan and again discuss the question of the movement to be made, etc., etc.

"MONDAY, JANUARY 13.—Went to the President's with the Secretary of Treasury. Present, the President, Governor Chase, Governor Seward, Postmaster-General, General McClellan, General Meigs, General Franklin, and myself, and, I think, the Assistant Secretary of War. The President, pointing to a map, asked me to go over the plan I had before spoken to him of. He at the same time made a brief explanation of how he came to bring General Franklin and General McDowell before him. I mentioned in as brief terms as possible what General Franklin and I had done under the President's order, what our investigations had been directed upon, and what were our conclusions as to going to the front from our present base, in the way I have heretofore stated, referring also to a transfer of a part of the army to another base further south. That we had been informed that the latter movement could not be commenced under a month to six weeks, and that a movement to the front could be undertaken in all of three weeks. General Franklin dissented only as to the time I mentioned for beginning operations in the front, not thinking we could get the roads in order by that time. I added, *commence* operations in all of three weeks; to which he assented. I concluded my remarks by saying something apologetic in explanation of the position in which we were. To which General McClellan replied somewhat coldly, if not curtly—'You are entitled to have any opinion you please!' No discussion was entered into by him whatever, the above being the only remark he made. General

Franklin said that, in giving his opinion as to going to York River, he did it knowing that it was in the direction of General McClellan's plan. I said that I had acted entirely in the dark. General Meigs spoke of his agency in having us called in by the President. The President then asked what and when any thing could be done, again going over somewhat the same ground he had done with General Franklin and myself. General McClellan said the case was so clear a blind man could see it, and then spoke of the difficulty of ascertaining what force he could count upon; that he did not know whether he could let General Butler go to Ship Island, or whether he could re-enforce Burnside. Much conversation ensued, of rather a general character, as to the discrepancy between the number of men paid for and the number effective. The Secretary of the Treasury then put a direct question to General McClellan to the effect as to what he intended doing with his army, and when he intended doing it? After a long silence, General McClellan answered that the movement in Kentucky was to precede any one from this place, and that that movement might now be *forced;* that he had directed General Buell if he could not hire wagons for his transportation, that he must take them. After another pause he said he must say he was very unwilling to develop his plans, always believing that in military matters the fewer persons who were knowing to them the better; that he would tell them if he was *ordered* to do so. The President then asked him if he counted upon any particular time; he did not ask what that time was, but had he in his own mind any particular time fixed when a movement could be commenced. He replied he had. Then, rejoined the President, I will adjourn this meeting."

It need hardly be said that the plan of campaign that General McClellan had in his mind, and which he was unwilling to disclose in presence of his subordinates and an unmilitary council, was the project of attacking Richmond by the lower Chesapeake. A few days afterwards he fully developed this plan in a letter to the President, and the result was that the President disapproved it and by an order issued on the 31st of January, substituted one of his own.* This order was as follows:

SPECIAL WAR ORDER, No. 1.

EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON, January 31, 1862.

Ordered, That all the disposable force of the Army of the Potomac, after providing safely for the defence of Washington, be formed into an expedi-

* McClellan: Report, p. 42

tion for the immediate object of seizing and occupying a point upon the railroad southwestward of what is known as Manassas Junction, all details to be in the discretion of the commander-in-chief, and the expedition to move before or on the 22d day of February next.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

The operation here indicated is that of a flanking movement on the enemy's position at Manassas. Now, it is due to add that in thus disapproving the plan of operations of General McClellan and substituting one of his own, there is conclusive evidence to show that the President was moved less by any consideration of the relative strategic merits of the two plans of campaign, than by the question of *time* in regard to the commencement of active operations. With him this was the controlling circumstance; for the anxiety on the part of the Administration for an immediate movement of the Army of the Potomac had become what General McClellan calls "excessive;"* and four days before the order of the 31st January, dictating a movement of the Army of the Potomac against Manassas, the President had decreed that "a *general movement* of the land and naval forces of the United States against the insurgent forces should be made on the 22d day of February."† It is obvious, therefore, that the

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* "About the middle of January, 1862, upon recovering from a severe illness, I found that excessive anxiety for an immediate movement of the Army of the Potomac had taken possession of the minds of the Administration." McClellan's Report, p. 42.

† This order, styled "President's General War Order, No. 1," was issued on the 27th of January, without consultation with General McClellan (Report, p. 42). It is as follows:

EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON, January 27, 1862.

Ordered, That the 22d day of February, 1862, be the day for a general movement of the land and naval forces of the United States against the insurgent forces. That especially the army at and about Fortress Monroe, the Army of the Potomac, the Army of Western Virginia, the army near Mumfordsville, Kentucky, the army and flotilla at Cairo, and a naval force in the Gulf of Mexico, be ready to move on that day.

That all other forces, both land and naval, with their respective commanders,

President, having categorically ordered a general movement of all the armies to be made on the 22d of February, was forced to the next step of prescribing for the operations of the Army of the Potomac a plan of campaign which could be undertaken at the time fixed. It was impossible that McClellan's project could be initiated at the appointed period; for not only was it necessary to put in execution the difficult task of moving the army and all its material to the designated point on the Lower Chesapeake, but it was necessary first of all to provide the vast amount of water transportation needful for so colossal an enterprise. Hence the order for a direct movement on Manassas. Upon the receipt of this order, General McClellan lost no time in seeing the President and requesting to know whether this order was to be regarded as final, and whether he could be permitted to submit in writing his objection to the plan of the Executive and his reasons for preferring his own. Permission was accorded, and on the 3d of February the general-in-chief submitted, in a paper to the Secretary of War, an elaborate discussion of the two plans of campaign.* Whether from the force of reasoning of the paper, or from other and extrinsic considerations,† the result was that the President rescinded his order for the movement on Manassas; and on the 27th of February the War Department instructed its agents to procure at once the

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obey existing orders for the time, and be ready to obey additional orders when duly given.

That the heads of departments, and especially the Secretaries of War and of the Navy, with all their subordinates, and the general-in-chief, with all other commanders and subordinates of land and naval forces, will severally be held to their strict and full responsibilities for prompt execution of this order.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

* Report, pp. 43–48.

† Mr. Raymond, editor of the New York Times, who had the best means of knowing the secrets of the Presidential mind, remarks: "The President was by no means convinced by General McClellan's reasoning; but in consequence of his steady resistance and unwillingness to enter upon the execution of any other plan, he assented," etc. History of the Administration of President Lincoln, p. 225.

necessary steamers and sailing-craft to transport the Army of the Potomac to its new field of operations.

Even after this step had been taken, however, the President, convinced against his will, retained his aversion to the proposed movement. He repeatedly expressed his dissatisfaction at the project of removing the army from Washington, and preferred that an operation should be made for opening the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad by a movement across the Potomac at Harper's Ferry, and another for the destruction of the enemy's batteries on the Potomac. General McClellan seems to have been able to overcome these objections by a recital of the same considerations he had previously presented; but, on the 8th of March, the President returned with renewed vigor to his old position, and urged him to submit his project of campaign to a council of his division commanders. The meeting was accordingly held the same day. The commanding general laid before his officers the inquiry, whether it were advisable to shift the base of operations. The plan of a change of base to the lower Chesapeake was approved by eight out of the twelve generals present.

Impressed by the emphasis of the approval which General McClellan's plan received in the adhesion thereto of two to one of the chief officers of the army, the President, nevertheless, saw fit to bind the execution of the plan, which he could now do no less than approve, by several embarrassing restrictions, contained in two important war-orders issued on the 8th of March. The first of these orders directed the organization of the Army of the Potomac into four corps, and nominated four generals to their command. These officers were not of General McClellan's selection, while their appointment excluded certain other officers upon whom he had fixed for corps commanders.* The second of these orders

* The officers nominated to the command of the corps into which the Army of the Potomac was divided were, Generals Keyes, Sumner, Heintzelman, and McDowell. The latter was well fitted for the command by his ability, but the relations between him and the commander were not cordial.

prescribed the conditions upon which a change of base would be allowed, and is in the following terms:

GENERAL WAR ORDER, No. 3.

EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON, March 8, 1862.

Ordered, That no change of the base of operations of the Army of the Potomac shall be made without leaving in and about Washington such a force as, in the opinion of the general-in-chief and the commanders of army corps, shall leave said city entirely secure.

That no more than two army corps (about fifty thousand troops) of said Army of the Potomac shall be moved *en route* for a new base of operations, until the navigation of the Potomac from Washington to the Chesapeake Bay shall be freed from the enemy's batteries and other obstructions, or until the President shall hereafter give express permission.

That any movement as aforesaid, *en route* for a new base of operations, which may be ordered by the general-in-chief, and which may be intended to move upon the Chesapeake Bay, shall begin to move upon the bay as early as the 18th of March; and the general-in-chief shall be responsible that it so moves as early as that day.

Ordered, That the army and navy co-operate in an immediate effort to capture the enemy's batteries upon the Potomac between Washington and the Chesapeake Bay. ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

L. THOMAS, Adjutant General.

It is easy to see what must have been the result of this fatal indecision, vacillation, and want of harmony between the Administration and the chief of the army; but it happened that this clash of opinion was suddenly interrupted by an event that made a complete change in the military situation. This event was no less than the sudden evacuation of Manas-

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General Sumner was the ideal of a *soldier;* but he had few of the qualities that make a *general.* The others do not call for any analysis. I have, in a previous part of this volume (p. 64), set forth the views of General McClellan touching the organization of corps; and, as there remarked, his failure to make appointments to these commands at the time he was all-powerful resulted in his having forced upon him as lieutenants men he did not wish in that capacity. It would appear, from a curious piece of history detailed in the Journal of the Committee on the Conduct of the War, that it was through the pressure of the members of that committee, and of the new Secretary of War, Mr. Stanton, that corps were at this time formed; and, indeed, by them, as a species of Aulic Council, that all the larger war-questions were determined.

sas by the Confederate Army, and its retirement behind the line of the Rappahannock. General Johnston, who, a considerable time previously, had formed the design of retiring nearer his base, had for two weeks been preparing the evacuation by the quiet removal of the army-stores and war-material; and when he finally withdrew his army from Manassas, on the 8th of March, so skilfully was the enterprise managed, that the first intimation thereof gained by the Union forces was from the smoke of the burning huts, fired by the Confederates on their retirement! With a view rather of giving the troops some experience on the march and bivouac than for the purpose of pursuit, General McClellan ordered a forward movement of the army towards Centreville the next day, and immediately dispatched two regiments of cavalry under Colonel Averill to Manassas. A few days afterwards, a large body of cavalry, with some infantry, under command of General Stoneman, was sent along the Orange and Alexandria Railroad to determine the position of the enemy, and, if possible, force his rear across the Rappahannock; but the roads were in such condition that, finding it impossible to subsist his men, Stoneman was forced to return after reaching Cedar Run. It was found that the enemy had destroyed all the bridges. This expedition was followed by a strong reconnoissance of Howard's division of Sumner's corps to the Rappahannock, and, under cover of this mask, the main body of the Union army was moved back to the vicinity of Alexandria. Johnston, who had retired behind the Rappahannock, finding on survey that the Rapidan afforded a better line, moved his army thither, and placed it in position on that river.*

The Confederate abandonment of Manassas necessitated several changes in the projected campaign. In his proposed scheme of transferring his army to the lower Chesapeake, General McClellan's favorite point for the new base of operations had been Urbana on the Rappahannock. But this en-

* I derive these facts touching the evacuation of Manassas from General Johnston himself.

terprise, which had for its object to cut off the retreat of the Confederates on Richmond, of course became impossible after they had retired behind the Rappahannock. There now remained the move to the Peninsula,—a move which he had considered in his general plan, but which he regarded as less brilliant and promising less decisive results. This project was submitted to a council of the corps commanders while at Fairfax Courthouse, on the 13th of March, and by them it was unanimously approved, provided the Merrimac (which a few days before had made its destructive raid on the vessels in Hampton Roads, and was now at Norfolk) could be neutralized; that means of transport for the army were at hand; that a naval force could be obtained to aid in silencing the enemy's batteries on the York River; and that sufficient force should be left to cover Washington, to give an entire feeling of security. The proceedings of this council were submitted to the President, by whom they were approved, upon condition that Washington should be made entirely safe, and Manassas Junction occupied in sufficient force to prevent its repossession by the enemy.

General McClellan immediately began his preparations in accordance with these instructions. The duty of covering the line of the Potomac and Washington he assigned to General Banks, commanding the Fifth Corps, and at this time holding the Shenandoah Valley. General Banks was ordered to post the bulk of his command, well intrenched, at Manassas; from thence to repair the Manassas Gap Railroad to Strasburg—to be held by a force intrenched,—thus reopening communication with the Shenandoah Valley: this general line to be held with cavalry well to the front.* Just as General Banks was about to move his corps to Manassas, however, there occurred a series of events that compelled him to retain the greater part of his force in the Shenandoah Valley. At the time of the evacuation of Manassas by the enemy, Stonewall Jackson, with his division of about eight

* Instructions to General Banks: Report, p. 60.

thousand men, was posted at Winchester—the Union troops occupying Charlestown; but on the advance of General Banks' force, on the 12th of March, he retreated; and, pursued by the division of Shields, retired twenty miles south of Strasburg. Under cover of this advance, the first division of Banks' corps was, on the 20th, put *en route* for Manassas, and Shields fell back to Winchester. Jackson, informed probably of the withdrawal of the troops from the Valley, but exaggerating its extent, returned upon his steps, and, on the afternoon of the 23d, attacked Shields near Winchester. Jackson met a severe repulse, after which he made his way southward. This affair caused General Banks to return himself, as also to recall the division then on the march for Manassas; and after this, events so shaped themselves, that Banks' command was retained in the Shenandoah Valley, and General Wadsworth was placed in command of the forces for the protection of the national capital.

To provide for the security of Washington was General McClellan's next care, and for this purpose he left behind a force of above seventy thousand men, with one hundred and nine pieces of light artillery. These troops were not, it is true, all concentrated at Washington, but they were all available for its defence.*

Meantime, the task of collecting water transportation, and embarking the troops for the proposed expedition, was being pushed forward with the utmost energy. Unhappily, however, while every thing seemed to be under way, certain occurrences took place that marred the auspicious circumstances that should have attended the expedition.

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* The troops left behind by General McClellan were as follows:

In garrison and in front of Washington	18,000
At Warrenton	7,780
At Manassas	10,859
In the Shenandoah Valley	35,467
On the lower Potomac	1,350
In all	73,456

Upon the evacuation of Manassas, General McClellan, who had, since the retirement of Lieutenant-General Scott in the preceding November, exercised the functions of general-in-chief, was relieved from the control of the armies in the field, and relegated to the command of the Army of the Potomac. At the same time, the troops in Western Virginia were placed under General Fremont, who was assigned to what was called the "Mountain Department." Now, a few days before he sailed for Fortress Monroe, General McClellan had been informed by the President that a strong "pressure" had been brought to bear at Washington to procure the detachment of Blenker's division of ten thousand men from the Army of the Potomac, in order that it might be added to the force under General Fremont. The President, apparently fully alive to the impolicy of depriving him of so considerable a body of men, on whom he had relied in forming his plan of campaign, assured General McClellan that he had decided to allow the division to remain; nevertheless, the very day before that officer left Alexandria, he received a note from the President, stating that he had been constrained, by the severity of the pressure, to order the division of Blenker to Fremont.* It will, moreover, presently appear, that scarcely had the army landed on the Peninsula, when, notwithstanding the President's emphatic assurances that no more troops should be detached from McClellan's command, the whole of McDowell's corps, whose arrival he was impatiently awaiting, for the purpose of making with it a turning movement on Yorktown, was taken from him, and General McDowell with his troops assigned to the new department of the Rappahannock. The reason assigned for this measure was, that General McClellan had not left behind a sufficient force for the protection of the capital. The result of this act will presently appear.

It is impossible to review the series of events here recorded

* Report, p. 63.

without a deep sense of pain and humiliation. A sufficient time has since elapsed to permit those who have at heart rather the vindication of historic truth than the partisan support of either side, to see that grave faults were committed both by the Administration and by General McClellan. While we are bound to believe that each was moved by the sincere desire to bring the war to a successful issue, each did much to frustrate the very object they had mutually at heart.

On the part of the Administration, a definite plan of campaign should have been promptly adopted and vigorously executed. When McClellan presented his scheme of a change of base to the lower Chesapeake, the project should either have been frankly approved or frankly disapproved. The plan was meritorious, and promised brilliant and decisive results.

But the President first disapproved it, on the ground that it would require too long a time to be put into execution.

He then approved it; but for almost a month withheld the order to provide water transportation to carry the plan into effect.

Having at length taken this step, and while the costly preparations were, by his own order, in the full course of execution, he renewed all his old objections to removing the army from the front of Washington, and required that the question should be submitted to a council of McClellan's generals.

These officers having approved the project, the Executive once more assented; but tied up his approval with the foolish restriction that not more than one-half the army should be taken away, until the enemy's batteries were destroyed,—an enterprise which would have involved a movement of the whole army, and which was, besides, certain to be the bloodless fruit of the execution of the general plan.

Again, when the evacuation of Manassas had so far necessitated a change of plan, that it was determined to seek a new base of operations at Fortress Monroe, and the council of corps commanders, to whom the President had referred the

decision of the question, had approved it on certain conditions as to the safety of Washington, etc., the President further embarrassed the operation by insisting on the presence of a large force at Manassas,—a measure not dictated by any sound military consideration.

From a still weaker motion, he ordered the detachment of Blenker's division from the command of McClellan, and transferred it to General Fremont.

And finally, moved by morbidly recurring fears for the security of the capital, no sooner had McClellan left for his new field of operations, than the President further stripped him of the powerful corps of McDowell, to retain it in front of Washington.

The secret of much of this conduct, were one disposed here to seek it, would doubtless be found in a "pressure" of the same kind and coming from the same source as that the President urged to General McClellan in excuse for depriving him of Blenker's troops. There had already sprung up at Washington a group of men, cherishing a violent hostility to General McClellan on account of his so-called "conservative" policy. Uninstructed in war, these men were yet influential, persistent, and had the ear of the President; but while it is easy to understand the ascendency which they gained over a character like that of Mr. Lincoln, the concession is unfortunate for his reputation as a statesman.

General McClellan should either have been removed from command, or he should have been allowed to work out his own plans of campaign, receiving that "confidence and cordial support" promised him by the President when he assumed command, and "without which," as Mr. Lincoln justly added, "he could not with so full efficiency serve the country." It is a jealous function that of military command, and, as the whole history of war teaches, can only be effectively exercised when accompanied with an entire freedom of action on the part of the commander, and cordial co-operation and support on the part of the Government. If there be any sure lesson taught by the military experience of nations, it is that when

extrinsic influences, whether from councils, or congresses, or war-offices, intrude into the direction of military affairs, all hope of success is gone. History has chosen to express its views of this kind of interference in the contumely with which it has covered the Austrian Aulic Council; but the Aulic Council was composed at least of military men. Of what was the American council composed? True, it was inevitable that, in a war such as that which fell upon the United States, considerations of a kind that may be called *political* should have a great part to play; and the determination of the policy of the war was certainly a question that came within the province of statesmanship, and which, when adopted in the councils of the Government, the commander in the field was bound to adhere to and carry out. But beyond this, and in the sphere of the actual conduct of the war, the general must be head and supreme. "In my judgment," says the greatest of theoretical writers on the art of war, discussing the part taken by the Aulic Council of Vienna in directing the operations of the Austrian armies, "the only duty which such a council can safely undertake is that of advising as to the adoption of a general plan of operations. Of course, I do not mean by this a plan which is to embrace the whole course of a campaign, tie down the generals to that course, and so inevitably lead to their being beaten. I mean a plan which shall determine the objects of a campaign; decide whether offensive or defensive operations shall be undertaken, and fix the amount of material means which may be relied upon in the first instance for the opening of the enterprise, and then for the possible reserves in case of invasion. It cannot be denied that all these things may be, and even should be, discussed in a council of government made up of generals and of ministers; but here the action of such a council should stop; for if it pretends to say to a commander-in-chief not only that he shall march on Vienna or Paris, but also in what way he is to manœuvre to reach those points, the unfortunate commander-in-chief will certainly be beaten, and the whole responsibility of his reverses will rest upon those who, two hundred miles off from the enemy, pre-

tend to direct an army which it is difficult enough to handle when actually in the field."*

On the other hand, it is to be admitted that General McClellan, too, committed grave faults. He had already put the patience of the public and the Administration to a severe strain by his six months' inactivity; and in proposing to remove his army from the front of Washington, he made another and peculiarly heavy draft upon their confidence. In this he again exposed himself to the criticism already made respecting his deficiency in those statesmanlike qualities that enter into the composition of a great general. Granting that the lower Chesapeake was the true line of approach to Richmond, yet finding the project of a removal of the army from the front of Washington so peculiarly repugnant to the wishes and convictions of the President and his councillors as to have suggested grave doubts as to the possibility of his obtaining a cordial support in its execution, he should have considered with himself whether he could follow the wishes of his superiors by operating against the enemy at Manassas; and if not, he should have resigned. "A general," says Napoleon, in one of his fine rulings regarding what may be called the ethics of war, "is culpable who undertakes the execution of a plan which he considers faulty. It is his duty to represent his reasons, to insist upon a change of plan; in short, to give in his resignation rather than allow himself to be made the instrument of his army's ruin." But the case before General McClellan was in nowise of the nature contemplated in this dictum. For the scheme of an advance against Manassas cannot be called "faulty," or of a kind to hazard the ruin of the army. It was a question of a choice of plans. Different plans of campaign may be each correct, and yet differ in boldness and brilliancy; and the bolder and more brilliant plan may often have to give way to one more feasible or more opportune. The determination of this in any given case is a problem in the higher generalship. Had

* Jomini: Précis de l'Art de la Guerre, vol. ii., p. 47.

General McClellan brought a juster estimate to the question both of what it was possible for him to do and what it was necessary for him to do, he might have avoided these painful entanglements, from the discussion of which I gladly escape to follow the steps of that master-stroke by which the army was lifted from Washington and planted on the Peninsula, and the checkered progress of the campaign on the new theatre of war.

IV.

THE PENINSULAR CAMPAIGN.

MARCH—AUGUST, 1862.

I.

BEFORE YORKTOWN.

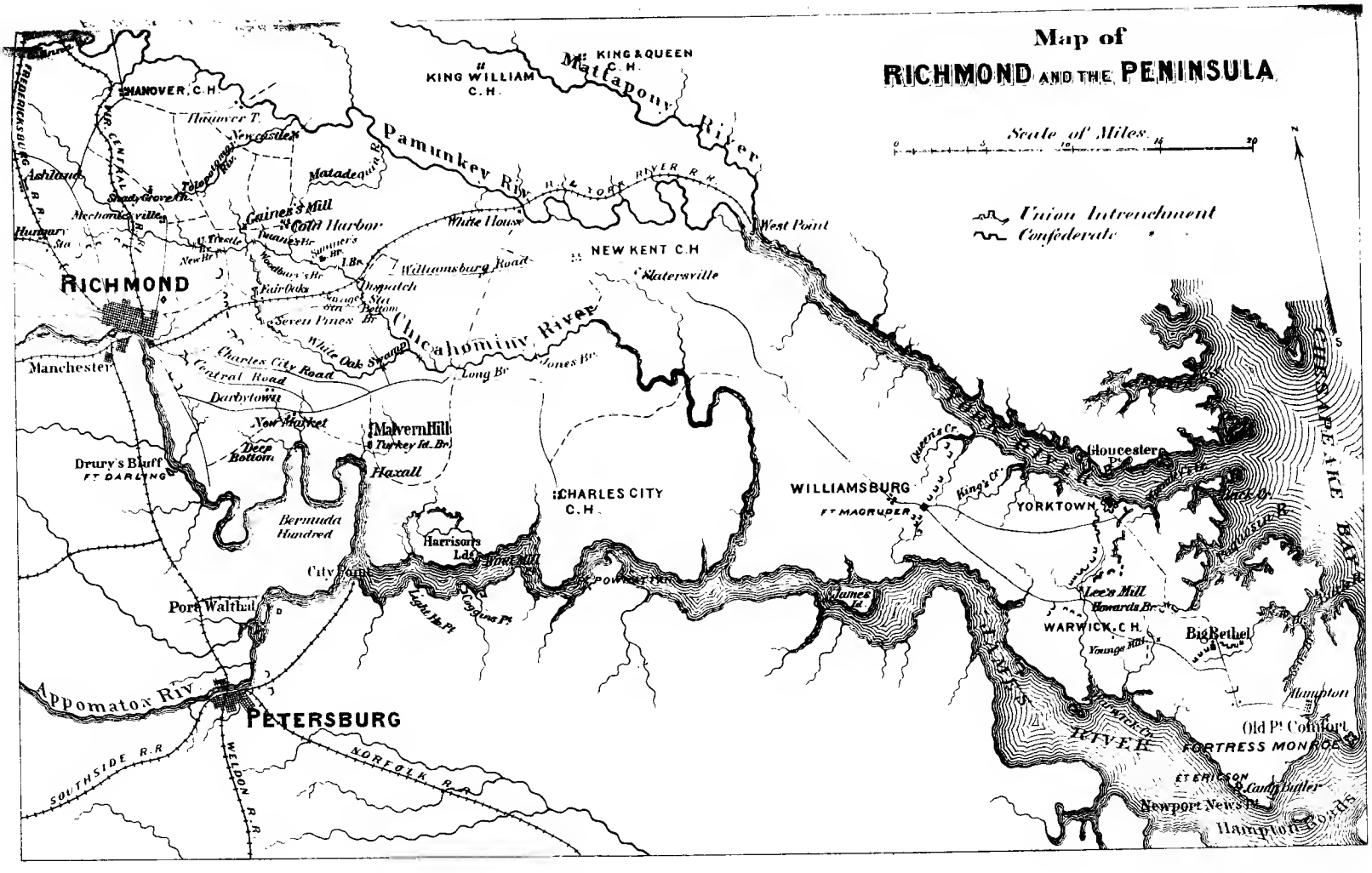
To take up an army of over one hundred thousand men, transport it and all its immense material by water, and plant it down on a new theatre of action nearly two hundred miles distant, is an enterprise the details of which must be studied ere its colossal magnitude can be adequately apprehended.* It was an undertaking eminently characteristic of the American genius, and of a people distinguished above all others for the ease with which it executes great material enterprises—a people rich in resources and in the faculty of creating resources. Yet, when one reflects that at the time the order was given to provide transportation for the army to the Peninsula,—the 27th of February 1862—this had first of all to be *created;* and when one learns that in a little over a month from that date there had been chartered and assem-

* Perhaps the best light in which such an operation may be read is furnished in Napoleon's elaborate Notes on his intended invasion of Great Britain in 1805, when he proposed to transport an army of one hundred and fifty thousand men in four thousand vessels from Boulogne to the English coast. As a military operation, there is, of course, no comparison to be made, because the Army of the Potomac had at Fortress Monroe an assured base in advance. It is simply as a *material* enterprise that there is a similarity. These notes are given in the collection of Memoirs dictated to Montholon and Gourgaud (Historical Miscellanies, vol. ii., pp. 373, *et seq.*)

bled no fewer than four hundred steamers and sailing-craft, and that upon them had been transported from Alexandria and Washington to Fortress Monroe an army of one hundred and twenty-one thousand five hundred men, fourteen thousand five hundred and ninety-two animals, forty-four batteries, and the wagons and ambulances, ponton-trains, telegraph materials, and enormous equipage required for an army of such magnitude, and that all this was done with the loss of but eight mules and nine barges (the cargoes of which were saved), an intelligent verdict must certainly second the assertion of the Assistant Secretary of War, Mr. Tucker, whose administrative talent, in concert with General McClellan, directed this vast undertaking, that "for economy and celerity of movement, this expedition is without a parallel on record." A European critic calls it "the stride of a giant"—and it well deserves that characterization.

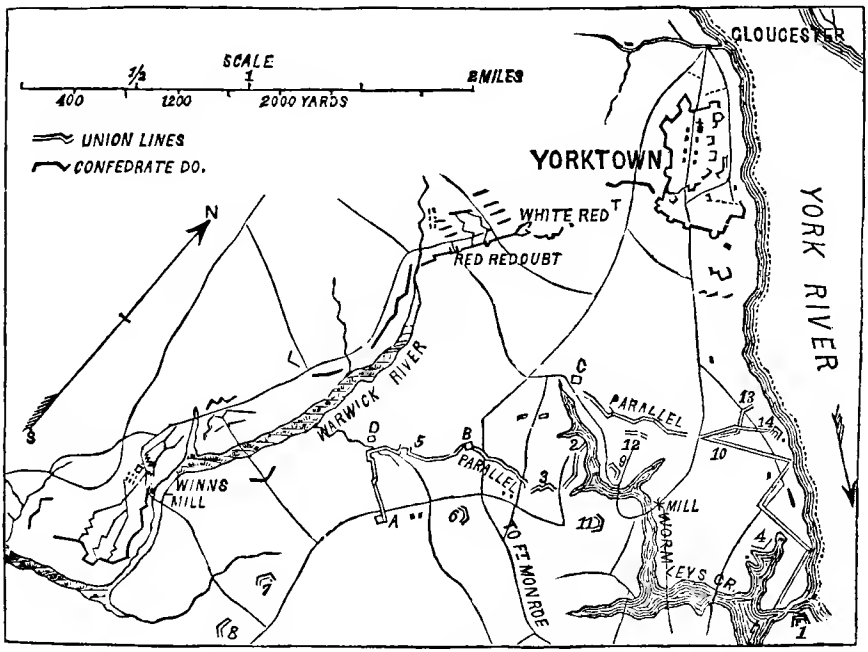
The van of the grand army was led by Hamilton's—afterwards Kearney's—division of the Third Corps (Heintzelman's), which embarked for Fortress Monroe on the 17th of March. It was followed by Porter's division on the 22d, and the other divisions took their departure as rapidly as transports could be supplied. General McClellan reached Fortress Monroe on the 2d of April, and by that time there had arrived five divisions of infantry, three regiments of cavalry, the artillery division, and artillery reserve—making in all fifty-eight thousand men and one hundred guns. This force was at once put in motion in the direction of Yorktown, in front of which the remainder of the army joined as it arrived.

The region known as "the Peninsula," on which the army thus found itself planted, is an isthmus formed by the York and the James rivers, which rising in the heart of Virginia, and running in a southeasterly direction, empty into Chesapeake Bay. It is from seven to fifteen miles wide and fifty miles long. The country is low and flat, in some places marshy, and generally wooded. The York River is formed by the confluence of the Mattapony and Pamunkey, which


Map of
RICHMOND AND THE PENINSULA
Scale of Miles
Union Intrenchment
Confederate
KING WILLIAM C.H.
KING & QUEEN C.H.
Mattapony River
Pamunkey Riv.
HANOVER C.H.
Hanover T.
Newcastle
Matadequin R.
Ashland
Shady Grove Ch.
Mechanicsville
Hungary Sta.
Gaines's Mill
Cold Harbor
White House
West Point
NEW KENT C.H.
Slatersville
Williamsburg Road
Dispatch
Fair Oaks
Seven Pines Br.
Chickahominy River
White Oak Swamp
Charles City Road
Central Road
Long Br.
Jones Br.
Manchester
Darbytown
New Market
Deep Bottom
Malvern Hill
Turkey Id. Br.
Haxall
Drury's Bluff
FT DARLING
Bermuda Hundred
CHARLES CITY C.H.
Harrisons Ldg.
Wind Mill
City Point
Light Hs. Pt.
Coggins Pt.
Port Walthal
Appomatox Riv.
PETERSBURG
SOUTHSIDE R.R.
WELDON R.R.
NORFOLK R.R.
WILLIAMSBURG
FT MAGRUDER
Queen's Cr.
King's Cr.
YORKTOWN
Gloucester Pt.
Back Cr.
Pagoosin R.
CHESAPEAKE BAY
James Id.
Lee's Mill
Howards Br.
WARWICK C.H.
Youngs Mill
Big Bethel
Hampton
Old Pt. Comfort
FORTRESS MONROE
FT ERICSON
Camp Butler
Newport News Pt.
Hampton Roads
JAMES RIVER
FREDERICKSBURG R.R.
FIR. CENTRAL R.R.

unite at West Point. Richmond, the objective of the operations of the Army of the Potomac, is on the left bank of the James, at the head of navigation, and by land is distant seventy-five miles from Fortress Monroe.

From Fortress Monroe the advance was made in two columns—General Keyes with the Fourth Corps (divisions of Couch and Smith) formed the left; and General Heintzelman with the Third Corps (divisions of Fitz-John Porter and Hamilton, with Averill's cavalry) and Sedgwick's division of the Second Corps, the right. At the very outset the roads were found nearly impracticable, the season being unusually wet. No resistance of moment was met on the march; but on the afternoon of the 5th of April the advance of each



SKETCH OF THE LINES OF YORKTOWN.

column was brought to a halt—the right in front of Yorktown and the left by the enemy's works at Lee's Mill. These obstructions formed part of the general defensive line of

the Warwick River, which General Magruder had taken up, and which stretched across the isthmus from the York to the James, an extent of thirteen and a half miles. The Confederate left was formed by the fort at Yorktown, the water batteries of which, with the guns at Gloucester Point, on the opposite bank of the York, barred the passage of that river; the right, by the works on Mulberry Island, which were prolonged to the James. Warwick River, running nearly across the Peninsula from river to river, and emptying into the James, heads within a mile of Yorktown. Its sources were commanded by the guns of that fort, and its fords had been destroyed by dams defended by detached redoubts, the approaches to which were through dense forests and swamps. Very imperfect or inaccurate information existed regarding the topography of the country at the time of the arrival of the army, and the true character of the position had to be developed by reconnoissances made under fire.

The Confederate defence of the peninsular approach to Richmond had, almost since the beginning of the war, been committed to a small force, named the Army of the Peninsula, under General Magruder. When the Army of the Potomac landed at Fortress Monroe, this force numbered about eleven thousand men. At Norfolk was an independent body of about eight thousand men under General Huger. The iron-plated Merrimac, mistress of Hampton Roads, barred the mouth of the James, the direct water-line to Richmond.

So soon as his antagonist's movement had become fully developed, General Johnston put his army in motion from the Rapidan towards Richmond, where for a time he kept it in hand. The Confederate leader did not expect to hold the Peninsula; for both he and General Lee, who then held the position of chief of staff to Mr. Davis, pronounced it untenable. Soon after the advent of the Union army, General Johnston went down to Yorktown, examined its line of defences, and urged the military authorities at Richmond to withdraw the force from the Peninsula. Assuming that the Federal commander would, with the aid of the navy, reduce

the fort at Yorktown, thus opening up the York River, and, by means of his numerous fleet of transports, pass rapidly to the head of the Peninsula, Johnston regarded the capture of any force remaining thereon as almost certain. The works at Yorktown he found very defective (though the position was naturally strong); for, owing to the paucity of engineers, resulting from the employment of so many of this class of officers in other arms, they had been constructed under the direction of civil and railroad engineers. In this state of facts, General Johnston wished to withdraw every thing from the Peninsula, effect a general concentration of all available forces around Richmond, and there deliver decisive battle.* These views were, however, overruled, and it was determined to hold Yorktown at least until Huger should have dismantled the fortifications at Norfolk, destroyed the naval establishment, and evacuated the seaboard,—a step that was now felt to be a military necessity. To carry out this policy, in view of which it was determined to hold the lines of Yorktown as long as practicable, re-enforcements were from time to time sent forward from the army at Richmond, and soon afterwards General Johnston went down and personally took command.

In his plans for forcing the enemy's defences, there were two auxiliaries on which General McClellan had confidently counted, and with these he expected to make short work of the operation of carrying Yorktown. The first of these auxiliaries was the navy, by the aid of whose powerful armament he designed to demolish the water-batteries at Yorktown and Gloucester Point, and then push a force upon West Point, at the head of the York River, thus turning the line of defences on the Warwick. But, upon applying to Flag-Officer Goldsborough for the co-operation of the navy, he was in-

* This exposition of the views and counsels of General Johnston I derive from himself. It is noteworthy that McClellan expected to do precisely what his antagonist assumed he would do—reduce Yorktown by the aid of the navy, and give general battle before Richmond.

formed by that officer that no naval force could be spared for that purpose, since he regarded the works as too strong for his available vessels.*

The second project was to land a heavy force in the rear of Gloucester Point, turning Yorktown by that method, and opening up the York River. This task he had assigned to McDowell's corps, which was to be the last to embark at Alexandria, and which should execute this operation in case the army found itself brought to a halt by the peninsular defences. But on the very day on which the army arrived before Yorktown, General McClellan was met by an order † of the President, to which reference has already been made, detaching McDowell's corps from his command, and retaining it in front of Washington.

That this measure was faulty in principle and very unfortunate in its results, can now be readily acknowledged without imputing any really unworthy motive to President Lincoln. When Mr. Lincoln saw the Army of the Potomac carried away in ships out of his sight, and learnt that hardly twenty thousand men had been left in the works of Washington (though above thrice that number was within call), it is not difficult to understand how he should have become nervous as to the safety of the national capital, and, so feeling, should have retained the corps of McDowell to guard it. In this he acted from what may be called the common-sense view of the matter. But in war, as in the domain of science, the truth often transcends, and even contradicts, common sense. It required more than common sense, it required the

* McClellan: Report, p. 79. It is due to say, that Commodore Goldsborough proffered the co-operation of a naval force, provided Gloucester Point should be first turned by the army. Report on the Conduct of the War, p. 632.

† This order, dated April 4, and received April 5, is as follows:

"ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE, April 4, 1862.

"By direction of the President, General McDowell's army corps has been detached from the force under your immediate command, and the general is ordered to report to the Secretary of War. Letter by mail.

"E. THOMAS, Adjutant-General.

"GENERAL MCCLELLAN."

intuition of the true secret of war, to know that the twenty-five thousand men under General McDowell would really avail more for the defence of the capital, if added to the Army of the Potomac on the Peninsula, thus enabling that army to push vigorously its offensive intent, than if actually held in front of Washington. This Mr. Lincoln neither knew nor could be expected to know; and it is precisely because the principles that govern military affairs are peculiar and of a professional nature, that the interference of civilians in the war-councils of a nation must commonly be disastrous. The President, who found himself by virtue of his office made commander-in-chief of all the forces of the United States, and who had, since the supersedure of McClellan as general-in-chief, assumed a species of general direction of the war, had passed his life in the arena of politics; and he brought the habits of a politician to affairs in which, unfortunately, their intrusion can only result in a confusion of all just relations. This antagonism between the maxims that govern politics and those that govern military affairs, is strikingly illustrated in a sentence of one of Mr. Lincoln's dispatches to General McClellan about this time. Referring to McClellan's repeated requests that McDowell's force should be sent him, the President says: "I shall aid you all I can *consistently with my view of due regard to all points.*"* Nothing could be more ingenuous than this avowal of the policy of an equable distribution of favors. But however discreet the course may be in politics, it is fatal in war, and is precisely that once-honored Austrian principle of "covering everything, by which one really covers nothing." War is partial and imperious, and in place of having "regard to all points," it neglects many points to accumulate all on the *decisive* point. The decisive point in the case under discussion was assuredly with the Army of the Potomac confronting the main force of the enemy. The proof of this was not long in declaring itself.

Thus deprived of the two auxiliaries on which he had

* McClellan: Report, p. 106.

counted, General McClellan judged that there remained but one alternative—either to break the Confederate lines of the Peninsula, if a weak spot could be found, or to undertake systematic operations against Yorktown, of the nature of a siege. Such a weak spot it was indeed thought had been discovered about the centre of the line, near Lee's Mill, where there was a dam covered by a battery; and with the view of determining the actual strength of this position, General W F. Smith, commanding the Second Division of the Fourth Corps, was ordered to push a strong reconnoissance over the Warwick at that point. Under cover of a heavy artillery fire from eighteen guns, under Captain Ayres, four companies of Vermont troops passed the creek, by wading breast-deep, and carried the rifle-trenches held by the Confederates as an advanced line. Here they were re-enforced by eight additional companies. The enemy, upon being driven from the front line, retired to a redoubt in the rear, and there receiving a re-enforcement, made a counter-charge on the handful of Union troops, who were driven across the creek, after holding the rifle-pits for an hour, entirely unsupported. Many were killed and wounded in recrossing the stream.* No subsequent attempt was made to break the Confederate line.

It now remained to undertake the siege of the uninvested fortifications of Yorktown,—a task to which the army at once settled down. Depots were established at Shipping Point, to which place supplies were brought direct by water; and indeed it was necessary to avoid land transportation as much as possible,—the roads being so few and so bad as to necessitate the construction of an immense amount of corduroy highway. The first parallel was opened at about a mile from Yorktown; and under its protection, batteries were established almost simultaneously along the whole front, extending from York River on the right to the Warwick on the left, along a cord of about one mile in length. In all, fourteen batteries and three redoubts, fully armed, and including some

* Magruder's Official Report: Confederate Reports of Battles, p. 515.

unusually heavy metal, such as one-hundred and two-hundred-pounders, were erected to operate in the reduction of the earth-works. The batteries as completed were, with a single exception,* not allowed to open, as it was believed that the return fire would interfere with the labor on other works. It was preferred to wait till the preparations should be complete, and then open a simultaneous and overwhelming bombardment. This period would have been reached by the 6th of May at latest. The artillery and engineer officers judged that a very few hours' fire would compel the surrender or evacuation of the works; but, to their great chagrin, no opportunity was afforded to bring this professional opinion to the practical test; for it was discovered on the 4th of May that the Confederates had evacuated Yorktown.† The retreat had been managed with the same masterly skill that marked the evacuation of Manassas; and the Army of the Potomac, cheated of its anticipated brilliant passage at arms, came into possession only of the deserted works and some threescore and ten siege-guns, that the Confederates had been obliged to leave as the price of their unmolested retreat.

In the preceding outline of the siege of Yorktown, I have confined myself to a simple recital of events. It is well

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* The exception was in the case of what was called Battery No. 1, which on one occasion opened on the wharf at Yorktown to prevent the enemy's receiving artillery stores.

† "The ease with which the two-hundred and one-hundred-pounders were worked, the extraordinary accuracy of their fire, and the since ascertained effects produced upon the enemy by it, force upon me the conviction that the fire of guns of similar calibre and power, combined with the cross-vertical fire of the thirteen and ten-inch seacoast mortars, would have compelled the enemy to surrender or abandon his works in less than twelve hours." Barry: Report of Artillery Operations, Siege of Yorktown, p. 134. This opinion is not justified by subsequent experience in the war, for the rude improvised earthworks of the Confederates showed an ability to sustain an indefinite pounding. General Johnston's evacuation of Yorktown seems to have been prompted by a like exaggeration of the probable effect of a bombardment.

known, however, that no portion of General McClellan's military career has given rise to a greater amount of criticism, or criticism founded less on the intrinsic merits of the case.

The judgment passed on the operations before Yorktown will turn on the view taken of the question whether the siege should have been made at all, or whether the Confederate position should not have been either broken or turned.

It has already been stated that the latter course—to wit, the turning of Yorktown—was General McClellan's original plan. To this duty McDowell's corps was assigned; but on the very day he arrived before Yorktown he received the order detaching McDowell's force from his command. The effect of this measure is set forth with much emphasis by General McClellan. "To me," says he, "the blow was most discouraging. It frustrated all my plans for impending operations. It fell when I was too deeply committed to withdraw. It left me incapable of continuing operations which had been begun. It compelled the adoption of another, a different and less effective plan of campaign. It made rapid and brilliant operations impossible. It was a fatal error." There will probably be no question as to the merits of the proposed movement by which it was designed to turn Gloucester Point and open up the York River; and the verdict will be equally clear as to the ill-judged policy—to put it at the mildest—which, at such a moment, took out of the commander's hand a corps destined for a duty so important. But it is not entirely clear that "rapid and brilliant operations" were not still feasible. General McClellan before he began the siege had with him a force of eighty thousand men; and it may be queried whether he could not from this force have still detached a corps of twenty-five thousand men to execute the movement designed for McDowell. The holding of his line in front of Yorktown—a line of seven or eight miles—would, to make it secure against offensive action on the enemy's part, require about forty thousand men. Now, the detachment of a column of twenty-five thousand would still have left him fifty-five thousand men. Moreover, one

division of McDowell's corps—that of Franklin, eleven thousand strong—did actually reach McClellan while the siege was in progress, and he held it on shipboard with the view of intrusting to it the task which the entire corps of McDowell had originally been expected to perform. Subsequently, however, he concluded that it was unequal to the work. But, re-enforced by another division, might it not have been sufficient? In proof of this it may be pointed out that, on the retreat of Johnston from Yorktown, Franklin's division* alone was assigned to a similar and equally difficult duty—to move on the flank of the Confederate army by way of West Point.

The question now remains, whether an attempt should have been made to break the enemy's lines. The total force under Magruder at the time of the arrival of the Army of the Potomac before his position was, according to Magruder's own testimony, eleven thousand men. More than half this force, however, was on garrison duty. "I was compelled," says he, "to place in Gloucester Point, Yorktown, and Mulberry Island, fixed garrisons, amounting to six thousand men. So that it will be seen that the balance of my line, embracing a length of thirteen miles, was defended by about five thousand men."† It appears that General Magruder fully expected, after the preliminary reconnoissances, that a serious attack would be made; and in this expectation his men slept in the trenches and under arms. "To my surprise," he adds, "he [McClellan] permitted day after day to pass without an assault. In a few days, the object of his delay was apparent. In every direction in front of our lines, through the intervening woods, and along the open fields, earthworks began to appear. Through the energetic action of the Government, re-enforcements began to pour in, and each hour the Army of the Peninsula grew stronger and stronger, until anxiety passed from my mind as to the result of an attack upon us."‡

* Franklin's division reached the Peninsula on the 22d of April.

† Magruder's Official Report: Confederate Reports of Battles, p. 516.

‡ Ibid., p. 517.

It is possible, however—and there is a considerable volume of evidence bearing upon this point—that General McClellan, during all the earlier portion of the month before Yorktown, had it in his mind, even without McDowell's corps, to undertake the decisive turning movement by the north side of the York. In this event, it would not only be in the direction of his plan to make no attack, but it would play into his hands that his opponent should accumulate his forces on the Peninsula. Yet this halting between two opinions had the result that, when he had abandoned the purpose of making the turning movement, it had become too late for him to make a direct attack—"all anxiety" as to the result of which had by that time "passed from the mind" of his opponent. From subsequent evidence, it would appear that a movement, not with the view of assaulting the fortifications of Yorktown (that would have been a bloody enterprise), but of breaking the line of the Warwick, thus investing Yorktown, if not compelling its immediate evacuation, was an operation holding out a reasonable promise of success.*

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* General Heintzelman, in his evidence before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, states it as his impression that, had he been allowed, he could have carried the line of the Warwick. "I think," says he, "if I had been permitted when I first landed on the Peninsula to advance, I could have isolated the troops in Yorktown, and the place would have fallen in a few days; but my orders were very stringent not to make any demonstration. I supposed, when I first got there, that we could force the enemy's lines at about Wynn's Mills, isolate Yorktown, so as to prevent the enemy from re-enforcing it, when it would have fallen in the course of a little while." Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 347.

General McClellan, however, expressed a contrary opinion:

"*Question.* In your opinion could Heintzelman have captured Yorktown by a rapid movement immediately upon his landing upon the Peninsula?

"*Answer.* No; I do not think he would have done it. When we did advance, we found the enemy intrenched and in strong force wherever we approached." Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 429.

General Barnard, who was chief-engineer of the army on the Peninsula, has, in his work on the Peninsular Campaign, stated with much emphasis, that McClellan should have assaulted; but this opinion *après coup* is somewhat damaged by the fact that he, at the time, gave a professional judgment *against* assault.

It was not, indeed, a *certain* operation, for the impracticable character of the country made the handling of troops very difficult; but vigorous measures were at the time so urgent that a considerable risk might well have been run. It was certain that the enemy would improve all the time allowed him to prepare new fortifications before Richmond, and assemble all his scattered forces for the defence of his capital. But just in proportion as time was valuable to him was the obligation imposed on General McClellan of not allowing him this time. It is now known that the Confederate government made good use of the month of grace allowed it by the siege of Yorktown; for not only were vigorous military measures taken, but at this very period the Confederate Congress passed the first conscription act, which gave Mr. Davis absolute control of the military resources of the South.

The proper method of meeting this was to have re-enforced the Army of the Potomac and organized reserves. But this was far from the views of those who controlled the war-councils at Washington; and the President, who had for the time being taken into his own hands the functions of general-in-chief, gave one constant *mot d'ordre*—"take Yorktown," —a command that reminds one of the story in Spanish history which runs in this wise: "When the reports of these matters reached Philip IV., he was disposed to entertain some prejudice against his general, and took on himself to give his own direction for the war, without consulting Spinola. His majesty directed that Breda should be besieged, and when it was represented that it was needful to make many preparations for an operation of that magnitude, the king sat down and wrote this laconic order to his general: 'Marquis, take Breda. *I, the King*' (Yo, el Rey)."

If Yorktown was at length taken without a combat and without blood, it was not without severe and exhausting labors in the siege. The victory, though apparently barren, was really more substantial than it seemed; and had General Johnston, in place of becoming alarmed at the preparations against him, determined to fight it out on the line of the

Warwick, there is little doubt that he might have prolonged the siege.

Meantime the *morale* of the Union army was excellent; and the road to Richmond being now opened, the troops turned their faces hopefully towards the capital of the Confederacy.

II.

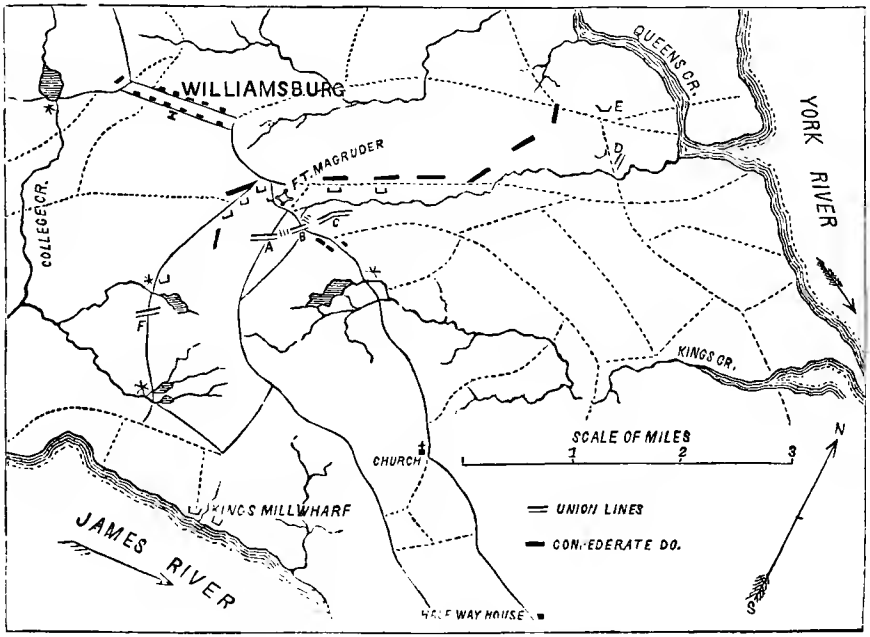
FROM YORKTOWN TO THE CHICKAHOMINY.

Upon the discovery of Johnston's withdrawal from Yorktown, all the available cavalry, together with four batteries of horse-artillery, under General Stoneman, was ordered in pursuit. The divisions of Hooker and Smith were at the same time sent forward in support, and afterwards the divisions of Kearney, Couch, and Casey were put in motion. General Sumner, the officer second in rank in the Army of the Potomac, was ordered to the front to take charge of operations, while General McClellan remained behind at Yorktown to arrange for the departure of Franklin's division by water to West Point. By this move it was expected to force the Confederates to abandon whatever works they might have on the Peninsula below that point.

Stoneman met little opposition till he reached the enemy's prepared position in front of Williamsburg, twelve miles from Yorktown. The Peninsula here contracts, and the approaching heads of two tributaries of the York and James rivers form a kind of narrow isthmus upon which the two roads leading from Yorktown to Williamsburg unite. Commanding the *débouché* was an extensive work with a bastion front, named Fort Magruder, and, to the right and left, on the prolongation of the line, were twelve other redoubts and epaulments for field-guns. These works had been prepared by the Confederates many months before.

Now, this position, though a strong one so long as its flanks were secured by the closing of the rivers on either side, was one which evidently General Johnston had no in-

tention of occupying; for, by the opening up of the York, the line of Williamsburg was exposed to be immediately turned. The Confederate army had, in fact, passed through Williamsburg towards the Chickahominy, and only a rear-guard re-



SKETCH OF THE FIELD OF WILLIAMSBURG.

A. Hooker's division.
B. Part of Couch's division.
C. Smith's division.
D. E. Works occupied by Hancock's brigade.

mained to cover the trains. When, however, Stoneman, on the afternoon of the 4th, drew up in front of the redoubts, Johnston, seeing pursuit to be serious, brought back troops into the works; and thus, by a kind of accident, there ensued on the morrow the bloody encounter known as the battle of Williamsburg.

Stoneman, on his arrival in front of Williamsburg, had a passage at arms with the Confederate cavalry; but, finding the position too strong to carry, he stood on the defensive, awaiting the arrival of the infantry. Now, such was the confusion that attended this hurried march, that by the time

Sumner could get up his advance divisions and make dispositions for attack, darkness ensued, and the men bivouacked in the woods. During the night a heavy rain came on, rendering the roads almost impassable.

In the morning, Hooker's division had taken position on the left, and Smith's on the right; the other divisions had not yet come up. The attack was opened by General Hooker in front of Fort Magruder. Having cleared the space in his front, he advanced two batteries* to within seven hundred yards of the fort, and, by nine o'clock, silenced its fire. But now the enemy began to develop strongly on his left,† and, as re-enforcements arrived, made a series of determined attacks with the view of turning that flank. These attacks were made with constantly increasing pressure, and bore heavily on Hooker. That officer had taken care to open communication with the Yorktown road, on which fresh troops were to come up; yet, notwithstanding the repeated requests made by him for the assistance he sorely needed, none came.‡ He was therefore compelled to engage the enemy during the whole day; and, between three and four o'clock, his ammunition began to give out, so that some of his shattered brigades were forced to confront the enemy with no other cartridges than those they gathered from the boxes of their fallen comrades.§ At length, between four and five o'clock, Kearney's division, which had been ordered in the morning to go to the support of Hooker, but had met great delay in passing the masses of troops and trains that obstructed the single deep muddy defile, arrived. Learning the condition of Hooker's men, Kearney took up his division at the double-quick, at-

* Batteries of Webber and Bramhal.

† Held at first by Patterson's New Jersey brigade, and then re-enforced.

‡ It is due to mention, however, that, about one o'clock, Peck's brigade came up and took position on Hooker's right, and, being re-enforced by Devin's brigade, held the centre of the Union line with much firmness against several attacks. Couch: Report.

§ Hooker: Report of Williamsburg. During the action, five guns of Webber's battery (its support being withdrawn for service on the left) fell into the hands of the enemy.

tacked spiritedly, re-established the line, and enabled Hooker's worn-out troops to withdraw. Hooker lost one thousand seven hundred men.

While, during the morning, the fight thus waxed hot in front of Fort Magruder, the troops on the right, composed exclusively of General Smith's division, had not engaged the enemy; but towards noon, Sumner ordered General Smith to send one of his brigades to occupy a redoubt on the extreme right, said to be evacuated by the enemy. For this purpose, Hancock's brigade was selected.* Making a wide detour to the right, which brought him within sight of the York River, Hancock passed Cub Dam Creek on an old mill-bridge, and took possession of the work indicated, which he found unoccupied. Twelve hundred yards in advance, another redoubt was discovered in the same condition, and this also he quietly took possession of.

The position which, through the carelessness of the Confederates,† Hancock had thus seized, proved to be a very important one, having a crest and natural glacis on either side, and entirely commanding the plain between it and Fort Magruder. He had in fact debouched on the flank and rear of the Confederate line of defence. On reconnoitring what lay beyond, there were found to be two more redoubts between the position and the fort. These seemed to be occupied by

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* Davidson's brigade was also under Hancock's command at this time, and he detailed for the movement, from his own brigade, the Fifth Wisconsin, Forty-ninth Pennsylvania, and Sixth Maine; and from Davidson's brigade, the Seventh Maine and Thirty-third New York volunteers. To these were attached Lieutenant Crowen's New York battery of six guns. Hancock's Official Report.

† General Johnston, in conversation with the writer, stated that neither himself nor any of his officers was even aware of the existence of these redoubts on the extreme left of the Confederate position,—the line of works having been prepared long before under General Magruder. The first intimation he had of their existence was when Hill brought him report that the enemy was in occupation of an *unknown* redoubt on the left, and asked permission to drive him off. Johnston told him to do so, but to "act with caution." Accordingly, Hill detached troops under General Early, who led the unsuccessful attack afterwards made on Hancock.

at least some force. Hancock put his battery into position to play upon these works, and a few shells and the fire of the skirmishers proved sufficient to drive the Confederates from their cover; but he did not deem it prudent to occupy them, until re-enforcements should arrive.

It was not till now that the Confederate commander, whose attention had been absorbed in the attack of Hooker on his right, became aware of this menacing movement on his left; but being apprised of the danger, he immediately took measures to meet it. Now it happened that precisely at this juncture, Hancock, instead of receiving the re-enforcements he had repeatedly and urgently sent for, got a message from General Sumner, instructing him to fall back to his first position.* Hancock, appreciating the commanding importance of his position, delayed doing so as long as possible. But about five o'clock, seeing that the Confederates were in motion on his front, that they had reoccupied the two redoubts from which they were last driven, and that they were threatening both his flanks, he retired his troops behind the crest. Here he formed his line with about one thousand six hundred men, being determined to remain. Waiting till the advancing enemy got below the rise of the hill, and within thirty paces, he ordered a general charge. This was executed in a very spirited manner: a few of the enemy who had approached nearest were bayoneted;† the rest broke and fled in all directions, and the Confederate flanking force, finding their centre routed, also beat a hasty retreat.‡ Shortly after the action was decided, General Smith, by order of General McClellan, who had reached the front and appreciated the position secured by Hancock, brought up strong re-enforcements. At the same time the firing ceased in front of Fort Magruder, and the troops, wet, weary, and hungry, rested on their arms. But Williamsburg was really won, for Hancock held the key

* Hancock: Report of Williamsburg.

† This fact is vouched for by official evidence.

‡ The Confederate loss was heavy, numbering over five hundred; Hancock's total loss was one hundred and twenty-nine.

of the position; and during the night, Longstreet retired to join the body of Johnston's army, now rapidly marching towards the Chickahominy.*

While the action before Williamsburg was going on, General Franklin was embarking his division for the purpose of ascending the York River by water. This was accomplished on the following day, and on the morning of the 7th he had completed the disembarkation of his division opposite West Point, on the right bank of the Pamunkey, a short distance above where that river empties into the York. But on attempting to advance, Franklin was met by the Confederate division of Whiting, whose presence, and a spirited attack of Hood's Texas brigade, served to hold Franklin in check.

The operations here described, constituting the pursuit of the Confederates (which really ended at Williamsburg), are open to criticism. The pursuit was made on two lines, by land and by water, and Johnston skilfully disposed his echelons to meet both advances. The move by water, which was the most promising, since it menaced the enemy's flank, was not made in sufficient force, and presented merely the character of a detachment on the Confederate rear,—a species of operation which is seldom successful. Besides, it started too late and arrived too late.† It could be of no avail, unless supported by the whole army coming from Williamsburg.‡ But there was no assurance that this could be, for the existence of the defences of Williamsburg, where the Confederates were sure, if need be, to make a stand, was known.§

* "At half-past three, A. M., of the 6th, the pickets reported that the enemy appeared to be evacuating the works in front. At sunrise, these strong works were in the possession of my division, and Heintzelman's corps subsequently moved out and occupied Williamsburg." Couch: Report of Williamsburg.

† The Confederates evacuated Yorktown on the night of May 3–4. Franklin's division had just been disembarked from the transports, so that re-em barkation was necessary, and it did not start till the morning of the 6th, and did not make the landing near White House till the morning of the 7th.

‡ Schalk: Campaigns of 1862–3, p. 169.

§ Barnard: Report of Engineer Operations, p. 63.

The action at Williamsburg was very unfortunate, though General McClellan cannot be held responsible for it, unless he may be blamed for remaining behind at Yorktown to superintend the getting off of Franklin's expedition. But to blame him for this would be hardly warrantable. He was within easy communication with the advance, which was placed under orders of his lieutenant, General Sumner; and he had a right to suppose that he would be kept informed of every thing of importance occurring in the front. Yet he was left entirely unaware, till the afternoon, that any thing but a trivial affair of the rear-guard had taken place. Sumner, that model of a *soldier* though not of a *general*, had too much the fire of the *vieux sabreur* to allow his head to work coolly and clearly in situations where that temper of mind was most needed; and his conduct of affairs at Williamsburg was marked by great confusion. So contradictory were his orders, that with thirty thousand men within three or four miles of the position, the division of Hooker was left to bear alone the brunt of successive severe attacks; and the result was the loss of above two thousand men,* without any corresponding gain. Hooker's fight was really quite unnecessary; for the difficult obstacles against which he had to contend might have been easily turned by the right. This was actually done at last by the flank movement of General Hancock, who, with slight loss, determined the issue.

On the retreat of the Confederates from Williamsburg, the Army of the Potomac was pushed forward as rapidly as the wretched condition of the roads would permit, on a line parallel with the York and Pamunkey; and on the 16th of May headquarters and the advance divisions reached White House, at the head of navigation of the latter stream. From that point the York River Railroad runs due west to Richmond, distant eighteen miles. Great depots were established at

* The precise loss was two thousand two hundred and twenty-eight killed, wounded, and missing.

White House, to which supplies were brought by water, and the columns moved forward on the line of the York River and Richmond Railroad; which, repaired as the army proceeded, became its line of communication with the base at White House. Thus the divisions advanced till they reached the Chickahominy, and by the 21st they were posted in echelon along the left or north bank of that stream, destined soon to become the scene of stirring events.*

The consummate strategist that had directed the skilful withdrawal from Yorktown and checked the advance of the Union columns at Williamsburg now proceeded to gather the Confederate forces around the lines of Richmond. In the exposition I have already given of Johnston's plan of operations to meet the advance of the Union army against Richmond, it has been indicated that it was his fixed purpose to refuse battle until his opponent should approach that city. Having now retired behind the line of the Chickahominy, he proceeded to urge upon the Richmond administration the policy of an immediate concentration of all available forces at that point, as affording the best means for a true defence of Richmond by a vigorous assumption of the offensive at the proper moment. Johnston found fully as much difficulty in impressing his views upon the cabinet at Richmond, as Mc-

* It will thus appear that it required two weeks for the march of fifty miles from White House to the Chickahominy. Regarded as a *pursuit* of the enemy, this was certainly tardy. But the nature of McClellan's operation can hardly be so defined. His ultimate aim was directed against Richmond, and he expected that McDowell's corps would make a junction with him. His operations were necessarily of a somewhat methodical character, and he was forced to open up a new base, and form depots of supplies. Besides, the roads were bad beyond all precedent. This tardiness has not escaped the censure of the Committee on the Conduct of the War, who, without admitting any mitigating circumstances, thus deliver verdict: "The distance between Williamsburg and the *line of operations* on the Chickahominy was from forty to fifty miles, and the army was about two weeks in moving that distance." (Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i, p. 20.) But perhaps military men may be disposed to dispute the justness of the judgment of a body of strategists with whom the Chickahominy figures as a "*line of operations!*"

Clellan did in impressing his on the cabinet at Washington. Nevertheless, in accordance with his counsels, the abandonment of Norfolk was ordered; and General Huger, after destroying the dockyards and removing the stores, evacuated that place on the 10th of May, and withdrew its garrison to unite with the army in front of Richmond. On the next day it was occupied by a Union force, led by General Wool, from Fortress Monroe. One important consequence of the evacuation of Norfolk was the destruction of the Merrimac, which vessel proving to have too great a draft of water to proceed up the James to Richmond, was on the following day blown up by order of her commander, Commodore Tatnall. This at once opened the river to the advance of the Union gunboats; and immediately afterwards a fleet, composed of the Monitor, Galena, Aroostook, Port Royal, and Naugatuck, under Commodore Rodgers, ascended the James, with the view of opening the water highway to Richmond. Within twelve miles of the city, however, the vessels were arrested by the guns of Fort Darling, on Drury's Bluff, and after a four hours' engagement, in which the Galena received severe damage, and the one-hundred-pounder Parrott on the Naugatuck was burst, the fleet was compelled to withdraw.

It was not these events, however, that determined McClellan's line of advance on Richmond by the York rather than by the James; for the former course had already been dictated to him by antecedent circumstances. Before the destruction of the Merrimac had opened the opportunity of swinging across to the James, the army was already well *en route* by the York and Pamunkey, under injunctions to push forward on that line for the purpose of uniting with a column under McDowell, which was about to move from Fredericksburg towards Richmond. As this circumstance exercised a controlling influence on the campaign, and powerfully affected its character and results, I shall enter into its exposition at some length in the succeeding chapter.

III.

CONFEDERATE STRATEGY ON THE CHICKAHOMINY AND IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHENANDOAH.

The brilliant historian of the war in the Spanish Peninsula lays down the maxim that "military operations are so dependent upon accidental circumstances, that, to justly censure, it should always be shown that an unsuccessful general has violated the received maxims and established principles of war." * Now as General McClellan's offensive movement towards Richmond really ended with the establishment of his army on the Chickahominy, and as the narrative of events to follow will show the enemy in an offensive attitude, and the army whose proper *rôle* was the aggressive reduced to the defensive, and finally compelled to retreat, it will be in place to follow attentively the course and causes of action with the view to discover whether the untoward events that befell the Union arms be traceable to any departure from those "established principles of war," the violation of which furnishes a just ground of censure.

Upon McClellan's arrival on the Chickahominy, there were two objects which he had to keep in view: to secure a firm footing on the Richmond side of that stream with the view of carrying out the primal purpose of the campaign, and at the same time to so dispose his forces as to insure the junction of McDowell's column from Fredericksburg with the force before Richmond. The former purpose was accomplished by throwing the left wing of the Army of the Potomac across the Chickahominy at Bottom's Bridge, which the Confederates had left uncovered. Casey's division of Keyes' corps crossed on the 20th of May, and occupied the opposite

* Napier: History of the Peninsular War, vol. i., p. 8.

heights. Heintzelman's corps was then thrown forward in support, and Bottom's Bridge was immediately rebuilt.

To secure the second object, McClellan extended his right wing well northward, and on the 24th carried the village of Mechanicsville, forcing the enemy across the Chickahominy at the Mechanicsville Bridge which the Confederates after crossing destroyed. He then awaited the march of McDowell to join him, in order to initiate operations against Richmond. I must now turn aside to show in what manner the object of this movement was baulked by the skill of the Confederates and the folly of those who controlled the operations of the Union armies.

At the time the Army of the Potomac was toiling painfully up the Peninsula towards Richmond, the remaining forces in Northern Virginia presented the extraordinary spectacle of three distinct armies, planted on three separate lines of operations, under three independent commanders. The highland region of West Virginia had been formed into the "Mountain Department" under command of General Fremont; the Valley of the Shenandoah constituted the "Department of the Shenandoah" under General Banks; and the region covered by the direct lines of approach to Washington had been erected into the "Department of the Rappahannock," and assigned to General McDowell at the time his corps was detached from the Army of the Potomac. About the period reached by the narrative of events on the Peninsula, these armies were distributed as follows: General Fremont with a force of fifteen thousand men at Franklin, General Banks with a force of about sixteen thousand men at Strasburg, and General McDowell with a force of thirty thousand men at Fredericksburg on the Rappahannock. It need hardly be said that this arrangement, the like of which has not been seen since Napoleon scandalized the Austrians by destroying in succession half a dozen of their armies distributed after precisely this fashion—nor indeed was ever seen before, save in periods of the eclipse of all military judgment—was in violation of the true

principles of war. One hardly wishes to inquire by whose crude and fatuitous inspiration these things were done; but such was the spectacle presented by the Union forces in Virginia: the main army already held in check on the Chickahominy, and these detached columns inviting destruction in detail. Not to have taken advantage of such an opportunity would have shown General Johnston to be a tyro in his trade.

It came about, after the commencement of active operations on the Peninsula had drawn towards Richmond the main force of the Confederates and relieved the front of Washington from the pressure of their presence, that the Administration, growing more easy touching the safety of the capital, determined, in response to General McClellan's oft-repeated appeals for re-enforcements, to send forward McDowell's corps,—not, indeed, as he desired, to re-enforce him by water, but to advance overland to attack Richmond *in co-operation* with the Army of the Potomac. To this end, the division of Shields was detached from the command of General Banks in the Shenandoah Valley, and given to General McDowell; and this addition brought the latter's force up to forty-one thousand men and one hundred guns. General McClellan had received official notification of this intended movement; and on the march from Williamsburg to the Chickahominy, as has been shown, he threw his right wing well forward, so as to insure the junction of McDowell's force, when it should move forward from Fredericksburg.* After numerous delays, the time of advance of this column was at length fixed for the 26th of May, a date closely coincident with the arrival of the Army of the Potomac on the Chickahominy. The head of McDowell's column had already been pushed eight miles

* It should not be forgotten that this was the controlling consideration in the choice by General McClellan of the line of advance by the Pamunkey, instead of swinging his army across to the James immediately after the battle of Williamsburg and the destruction of the Merrimac immediately thereon,—a course the adoption of which would, in all probability, have altered the entire character of the campaign.

south of Fredericksburg; and McClellan, to clear all opposition from his path, sent forward Porter's corps to Hanover Junction, where he had a sharp encounter with a force of the enemy under General Branch, whom he repulsed with a loss of two hundred killed and seven hundred prisoners, and established the right of the Army of the Potomac within fifteen miles, or one march, of McDowell's van. McDowell was eager to advance, and McClellan was equally anxious for his arrival, when there happened an event which frustrated this plan and all the hopes that had been based thereon. This event was the irruption of Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley. The keen-eyed soldier at the head of the main Confederate army, discerning the intended junction between McDowell and McClellan, quickly seized his opportunity, and intrusted the execution of a bold *coup* to that vigorous lieutenant who had already made the Valley ring with his exploits.

Jackson, on retiring from his last raid in the Shenandoah Valley, which had ended in his repulse by Shields at Winchester (March 27), had retreated up the Valley by way of Harrisonburg, and turning to the Blue Ridge, took up a position between the south fork of the Shenandoah and Swift Run Gap. Here he was retained by Johnston, after the main body of the Confederate army had been drawn in towards Richmond. Jackson was joined by Ewell's division from Gordonsville on the 30th April, and at the same time he received the further accession of the two brigades of General Edward Johnson, who had held an independent command in Southwest Virginia. This raised his force to about fifteen thousand men. Banks' force, reduced by the detachment of Shields' division, sent to General McDowell, to about five thousand men, was posted at Harrisonburg. Fremont was at Franklin, across the mountains; but one of his brigades, under Milroy, had burst beyond the limits of the Mountain Department, and seemed to be moving to make a junction with Banks, with the design, as Jackson thought, of advancing on Staunton. Jackson determined to attack these forces in

letail. Accordingly, he posted Ewell so as to hold Banks in heck, whilst he himself moved to Staunton. From here he hrew forward five brigades, under General Edward Johnson May 7), to attack Milroy. The latter retreated to his moun- ain fastness, and took position at a point named McDowell, vhere, re-enforced by the brigade of Schenck, he engaged Johnson, but was forced to retire on Fremont's main body at Franklin. Having thus thrown off Milroy eccentrically from ommunication with Banks, Jackson returned (May 14) to lestroy the force under that officer. But during Jackson's ursuit of Milroy, Banks, discovering his danger, had retired o Strasburg, followed by Ewell. Jackson therefore followed lso, and at New Market he formed a junction with Ewell. Instead of marching direct on Strasburg, however, Jackson liverged on a line to the eastward by way of Luray Valley, nd moved on Front Royal, with the view of cutting off Banks' retreat from Strasburg, interposing between him and re- enforcements, and compelling his surrender. The 23d he entered Front Royal, capturing the garrison of seven hundred men there under Colonel Kenly; and thence he moved to Middletown by a road to the right of the main Valley road, hoping there to cut off Banks. But the latter was too quick for him: so that when he reached Middletown, he struck only the rear of the retreating Union column. Banks, with his small force, offered such resistance as he could to the advance of Jackson, and took position on the heights of Winchester (May 24), where he gave fight, till, being as- sailed on both flanks, he retired hastily to the north bank of the Potomac (May 25), making a march of fifty-three miles in forty-eight hours. Jackson continued the pursuit as far as Halltown, within two miles of Harper's Ferry, where he remained till the 30th, when, finding heavy forces converging on his rear, he began a retrograde movement up the Valley.

The tidings of Jackson's apparition at Winchester on the 24th, and his subsequent advance to Harper's Ferry, fell like a thunderbolt on the war-council at Washington. The order for McDowell's advance from Fredericksburg, to unite with

McClellan, was instantly countermanded; and he was directed to put twenty thousand men in motion at once for the Shenandoah Valley, by the line of the Manassas Gap Railroad.* McDowell obeyed, but, to use his own language, "with a heavy heart," for he knew, what any man capable of surveying the situation with a soldier's eye must have known, that the movement ordered was not only most futile in itself, but certain to paralyze the operations of the main army and frustrate that campaign against Richmond on the issue of which hung the fortune of the war. In vain he pointed out that it was impossible for him either to succor Banks or co-operate with Fremont; that his line of advance from Fredericksburg to Front Royal was much longer than the enemy's line of retreat; that it would take him a week or ten days to reach the Valley, and that by this time the occasion for his services would have passed by. In vain General McClellan urged the real motive of the raid—to prevent re-enforcements from reaching him. Deaf to all sounds of reason, the war-council at Washington, like the Dutch States-General, of whom Prince Eugene said, that "always interfering, they were always dying with fear,"† heard only the reverberations of the guns of the redoubtable Jackson. To head off Jackson, if possible to catch Jackson, seemed now the one important thing; and the result of the cogitations of the Washington strategists was the preparation of what the President called a "trap" for Jackson—a "trap" for the wily fox who was master of every gap and gorge in the Valley! Now this pretty scheme involved the converging movements of Fremont from

* Dispatch from President Lincoln: Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 274.

† This expression of Prince Eugene is used by him in a passage of his Memoires, descriptive of an event curiously analogous to that to which the above text has relation: "Marlborough," says he, "sent me word that Berwick having re-enforced the duke of Burgundy, the army, which was now a hundred and twenty thousand strong, had marched to the assistance of Lisle. The deputies from the States-General, *always interfering, and always dying with fear*, demanded of me a re-enforcement for him," etc.—Memoirs of Prince Eugene, p. 166.

the west, and McDowell from the east, upon Strasburg. The two columns moved rapidly; they had almost effected a junction on the 31st; but that very day Jackson, falling back from Harper's Ferry, slipped between the two, and made good his retreat up the Valley, leaving his opponents to follow in a long and fruitless chase, all the time a day behind him.

The pursuers did their best: they pushed on, Fremont following in the path of Jackson up the Valley of the Shenandoah; while McDowell sent forward Shields' division by the lateral Luray Valley, with a view to head him off when he should attempt to break through the gaps of the Blue Ridge. Jackson reached Harrisonburg on the 5th of June; Fremont the next day. There Jackson diverged eastward to cross the Shenandoah at Port Republic, the only point where there was a bridge. Shields was moving up the east side of the river, was close at hand, and might prevent his crossing, or might form a junction with Fremont. Both results were to be prevented. Jackson threw forward his own division to Port Republic (June 7) to cover the bridge; and left Ewell's division five miles back on the road on which Fremont was following—the road from Harrisonburg to Port Republic. Next day Fremont attacked Ewell's five brigades, with the view of turning his right and getting through to the bridge at Port Republic to make a junction with Shields. At the same time Shields attacked the bridge on the east side, to make a junction with Fremont. The result was that Ewell repulsed Fremont, while Jackson held Shields in check. Early next morning, drawing in Ewell and concentrating his forces, Jackson threw himself across the river, burned the bridge to prevent Fremont from following; fell upon Shields' advance, consisting of two brigades under General Tyler, and repulsed him, capturing his artillery. The former of these affairs figures in history as the battle of Cross Keys, and the latter as the battle of Port Republic.

In this exciting month's campaign, Jackson made great captures of stores and prisoners; but this was not its chief

result. Without gaining a single tactical victory he had yet achieved a great strategic victory, for by skilfully manœuvring fifteen thousand men he succeeded in neutralizing a force of sixty thousand. It is perhaps not too much to say that he saved Richmond; for when McClellan, in expectation that McDowell might still be allowed to come and join him, threw forward his right wing, under Porter, to Hanover Courthouse, on the 26th of June, the echoes of his cannon bore to those in Richmond who knew the situation of the two Union armies the knell of the capital of the Confederacy.* McDowell never went forward—was never allowed, eager though he was, to go forward. Well-intentioned though we must believe the motives to have been of those who counselled the course that led to the consequences thus delineated, the historian must not fail to point out the folly of an act that will remain an impressive illustration of what is to be expected when men violate the established principles of war.

IV

THE BATTLE OF FAIR OAKS.

It is easy to see the perilous position in which the events just recited placed the Army of the Potomac. Had McClellan been free immediately after the battle of Williamsburg, when the destruction of the Merrimac opened up the James River as a highway of supplies, to transfer his army to that line, it is easy to see that he would have avoided those dangers of the other line whereof the enemy finally took such energetic advantage. I have already set forth the circumstances that dictated his advance by the line of the York and the Pamunkey—to wit, the expected march of McDowell's column from Fredericksburg for the purpose of joining the Army of the Potomac—and I have detailed the events whereby that column was prevented from making its antici-

* Prince de Joinville: The Army of the Potomac, p. 112, note

pated march. Now, it was almost simultaneous with the establishment of the base at White House that McDowell's column was turned aside from its contemplated co-operation with the Army of the Potomac, and diverted to the Shenandoah Valley. Knowing this fact, General McClellan knew that the hope of further re-enforcements was vain, and it was incumbent on him to act vigorously with his proper force. He knew that the presence of Jackson's corps in the Shenandoah Valley neutralized a force of fifteen thousand men that was certain to be brought against him if he should delay. Besides, he was making an offensive movement in which vigorous action was above all requisite; for when once the offensive has been assumed, it must be sustained to the last extremity. Yet, having reached the Chickahominy, he assumed an almost passive attitude, with his army, too, cut in twain by that fickle and difficult stream.

Now, though a position *à cheval* on a river is not one which a general willingly assumes, it is frequently a necessity, and in that case he spans the stream with numerous bridges.* It was necessary for General McClellan to pass the Chickahominy because it crossed his line of manœuvre against Richmond; and it was also necessary for him to leave a force on the eastern side to cover his communications with his base at the White House; but this is not a situation in which one would assume a passive attitude with few and very imperfect connections between the divided wings. The passage of the Chickahominy was made by Casey's division at Bottom's Bridge on the 20th of May, and by the 25th the corps of Keyes and Heintzelman were established on the right bank. Meantime, the corps of Sumner, Porter, and Franklin remained on the left bank. By the 28th, Sumner had constructed two bridges† for the passage of his corps; but

* "If a stream divide a position at right angles, it should be spanned with as many bridges as would enable troops and guns to pass from one side to the other, as if no such feature existed." General McDougall: Modern Warfare and Modern Artillery, p. 107.

† Known as "Sumner's Upper Bridge" and "Sumner's Lower Bridge."

up to the time when the Confederate commander assumed the initiative on the 31st, no provision was made for the crossing of the right wing, and the re-enforcement of that wing by the left involved a detour of twenty-three miles,—a distance quite too great for the possibility of re-enforcement in the fierce emergency of battle. Materials for three bridges* to be used in the passage of the right wing were indeed prepared, and by the 28th of May† these bridges were all ready to be laid. But, meantime, they were not laid, and the two wings were suffered to remain separated by the Chickahominy, and without adequate means of communication.

The Chickahominy rises in the highlands northwest of Richmond, and enveloping it on the north and east, empties into the James many miles below that city, and after describing around it almost the quadrant of a circle. In itself this river does not form any considerable barrier to the advance of an army ; but with its accessories it constitutes one of the most formidable military obstacles imaginable. The stream flows through a belt of heavily timbered swamp. The tops of the trees rise just about to the level of the crests of the highlands bordering the bottom, thus perfectly screening from view the bottom-lands and slopes of the highlands on the enemy's side. Through this belt of swamp the stream flows sometimes in a single channel, more frequently divided into several, and when but a foot or two above its summer level, overspreads the whole swamp. The bottom-lands between the swamp and the highlands, in width from three-quarters of a mile to a mile and a quarter, are little elevated at their margin above the swamp, so that a rise of the stream by a

* These bridges were the "New Bridge" and two other bridges, the one half a mile above and the other half a mile below.

† "So far as engineering preparations were concerned, the army could have been thrown over as early as the 28th of May, Sumner uniting his corps with those of Heintzelman and Keyes, and taking the enemy's position at New Bridge in flank and rear. Thus attacked, the enemy could have made no formidable resistance to the passage of our right wing." Barnard: Report of Engineer Operations, p. 21.

few feet, overflows large areas of these bottoms, and even when not overflowed they are spongy and impracticable for cavalry and artillery.*

In this state of facts, McClellan's disposition of his army must be considered a grave fault, and inaction in such a situation was in the highest degree dangerous. "A general," says the Archduke Charles, "must suppose that his opponent will do against him whatever he ought to do." Now, for Johnston to omit to strike one or the other of these exposed wings, was to neglect that principle which forms the whole secret of war—to be superior to your enemy at the point of collision: it was, in fact, to neglect a unique opportunity of delivering a decisive blow.

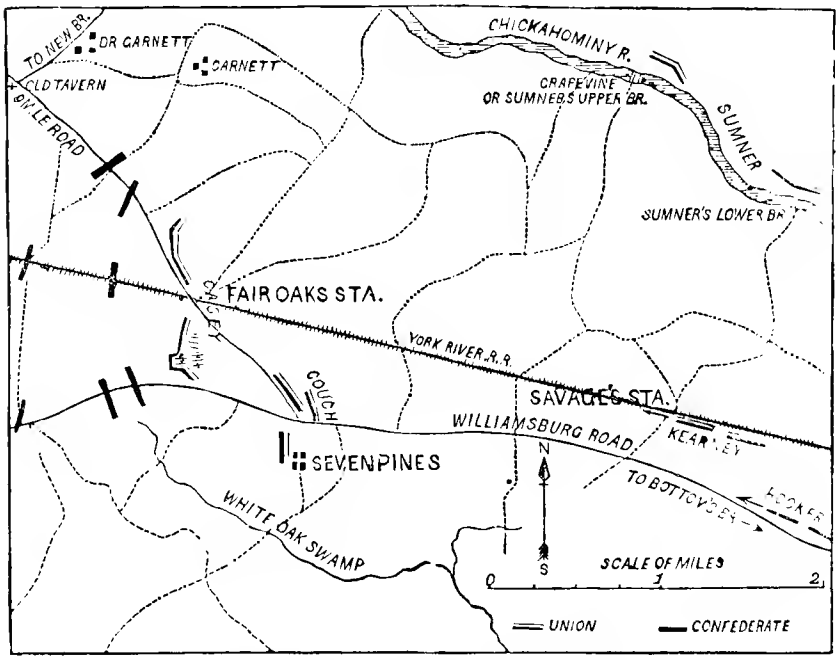
The Confederate commander was not the man to let slip such an opportunity; and, as soon as reconnoissances had fully developed the position of that portion of the Union army which lay on the Richmond side of the Chickahomy, he determined to act. It was a situation in which, by bringing two-thirds of his own force to bear against one-third of the Union force, he might hope not merely to defeat but to destroy the exposed wing. By the 30th of May he had formed his resolution, and he immediately made preparations for carrying it into effect on the following day.† During the

* Barnard: Report of Engineer Operations, pp. 18, 19.

† It is commonly supposed that it was the freshet in the Chickahominy, caused by the storm of the night of the 30th, that prompted General Johnston to attack; but he had fully resolved to strike before the storm came on, on the mere chances of the situation of the Union army. The storm did not come on till the night of the 30th, and the following extract from the official report of Major-General D. H. Hill will show that General Johnston had made dispositions for the attack as early as noon of that day: "These reconnoissances (of Hill's brigade commanders) satisfied me that the enemy was not in force on the Charles City road, but was on the Williamsburg road, and that he had fortified himself about the Seven Pines. The fact was further established, that the whole of Keyes' corps had crossed the Chickahominy. These facts I communicated to General Johnston *about noon on Friday, 30th of May.* I received a prompt answer from him, that, being satisfied by my report of the presence of the enemy in force in my immediate front, he had resolved to attack them." Official Reports of Battles. Richmond, 1864.

night of the 30th, there came a storm of unwonted violence; and this circumstance, while it would embarrass the execution of Johnston's proposed plan, at the same time gave that general the hope of making the operation still more complete from the situation in which it would place his opponent.

The reconnoissances of the Confederates had disclosed the fact that Casey's division of Keyes' corps held an advanced



SKETCH OF THE FIELD OF FAIR OAKS.

position on the Williamsburg road, three-quarters of a mile beyond the point known as Seven Pines and about six miles from Richmond. Couch's division of the same corps was stationed at Seven Pines, on both sides of the Williamsburg road and along the Nine-mile road, his right resting at Fair Oaks Station, on the Richmond and York River Railroad. Of the two divisions of Heintzelman's corps, that of Kearney was on the Williamsburg road and the railroad, three-quarters of a mile in advance of Savage Station; and that

of Hooker was guarding the approaches of the White Oak Swamp.

In this state of facts, Johnston made the following dispositions for attack: Hill (D. H.), who had been covering the Williamsburg and Charles City road, was directed to move his division, supported by the division of Longstreet, out on the Williamsburg road, but not to move till Huger's division, which was to move out on the Charles City road, should relieve him. Huger's duty was to strike the left flank of the Union force which Hill and Longstreet should engage in front. G. W Smith, with his division, was to advance on the right flank of the Union force, to the junction of the New Bridge road with the Nine-mile road, there to be in readiness either to fall on Keyes' right or to cover Longstreet's left.* The divisions were to move at daybreak; but the wretched condition of the roads, resulting from the storm, greatly retarded the movement of the troops. Hill, Longstreet, and Smith, indeed, were in position by eight o'clock; but not so Huger. For hour after hour, Longstreet and Hill awaited in vain the signal-gun that was to announce Huger's arrival in his proper position. At length, at ten o'clock, Hill† went forward on the Williamsburg road,‡ and presently struck Casey's division. The advance position beyond Seven Pines, held by that officer, was defended by a redoubt, rifle-pit, and abatis; but, at this time, these works were only in process of construction, and the troops were, indeed, engaged at this work when the attack was made.§ The pickets were quickly driven in, and

* Johnston: Report of Seven Pines: Confederate Reports of Battles, Richmond, 1864.

† Hill was acting under Longstreet's orders during the day.

‡ Hill's Report: Official Reports of Battles. Richmond, 1864.

§ The attack was not, however, a surprise, for the movement of the enemy's troops had been observed for several hours before. It appears, moreover, that about half-past ten an aid-de-camp of General Johnston was captured by the pickets of General Naglee. His presence so near the lines, and his "very evident emotion" when a few shots were fired in front of Casey's headquarters (Keyes' Report), caused increased vigilance, and the troops were ordered to be under arms at eleven o'clock.

the more so that a regiment* sent forward to support the picket-line gave way without making much if any resistance. The first blow fell upon Naglee's† brigade, which held a position in advance of the redoubt, where it made a good fight and held the enemy in check for a considerable time, and then retired and fought with the rest of the division in the redoubt and rifle-pits—the force being strengthened by Peck's brigade sent forward by General Couch. The Confederates advanced in close columns, and suffered severely from the fire of the batteries in front of and in the redoubt. Presently, however, one of their brigades, which had been sent round on the left of Casey, gained the rear of the redoubt.‡ When, therefore, a severe flank fire was opened by the force that had made this detour, the division crumbled away, the guns in the redoubt and a portion of those of the battery in front were captured,§

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* The One Hundred and Third Pennsylvania. See McClellan's Report, p. 108. But for a statement that this regiment did better than had been reported, see testimony of General Casey, in Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 445.

† In addition to Naglee's brigade, the position of which is given above, the other two brigades of Casey's division were posted as follows: General Wessel's brigade in the rifle-pits, and General Palmer's in rear of Wessel's. Of the artillery, one battery was in advance with Naglee; one in rear of the rifle-pits to the right of the redoubt; a third in rear of the redoubt; and a fourth, unharnessed, in the redoubt.

‡ General Johnston's account of the manner in which Casey's position was carried is as follows: "Hill's brave troops, admirably commanded and gallantly led, forced their way through the abatis, which formed the enemy's external defences, and stormed their intrenchments by a determined and irresistible rush. Such was the manner in which the enemy's first line was carried." (Johnston: Official Report.) But this does not give an accurate representation of the case. Hill, who was in command of the attacking columns, says: "General Rains *had now gained the rear of the Yankee redoubt*, and opened fire on the infantry posted in the woods. I now noticed commotion in the camps and redoubts, and indications of evacuating the position. Rodes took skilful advantage of this commotion, and moved up his brigade in beautiful order, and took possession of the redoubts and rifle-pits." Official Reports of Battles. Richmond, 1864.

§ Among those who fell in the redoubt were, Colonel G. D. Bailey Major Van Valkenberg, and Adjutant Ramsay, all of the First New York Artillery.

and such of the troops as held together were brought to a stand at General Couch's position at Seven Pines.*

Early in the action, General Keyes, whose troops were those upon whom the attack had thus far fallen, finding he was being hard pushed, had sent to General Heintzelman, who commanded the whole left wing of the army, and whose two divisions were close at hand, to send him aid. But the message was both delayed in reaching that officer,† and when he sent forward re-enforcements, they were, through some misunderstanding, very tardy in reaching the front; so that it was past four o'clock when Kearney, with his foremost brigade,‡ arrived at the position where Couch's troops and the wreck of Casey's division were struggling to hold their own.§ Berry's brigade was immediately thrown into the woods on the left, where his rifles commanded the left of the camp and works occupied by Casey in the morning, and now held by the enemy.

Meantime, though the divisions of Longstreet and Hill had thus for three hours been vigorously pushing forward on the Williamsburg road, the column of G. W Smith, to which was intrusted the important flanking operation already indicated in Johnston's original plan, had not yet moved. The Confederate commander had placed himself with this column; but failing to hear the musketry of Longstreet and Hill,‖ he waited till four o'clock, when, learning how these generals had been engaged, he immediately threw forward Smith's command. Thus it happened that when Casey had been driven back to Couch's line at the Seven Pines, and the latter with two regiments of his division had advanced to relieve the pressure on Casey's flank by an attack of the hostile left, he was met

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* "On my arrival at the second line, I succeeded in rallying a portion of my division."—Casey's Report.

† He received it at two P. M.—Heintzelman's Report.

‡ Berry's brigade.

§ Hooker's division did not reach the ground till the action was decided.

‖ "Owing to some peculiar condition of the atmosphere, the sound of the musketry did not reach us."—Johnston: Report of Seven Pines.

by large masses of the enemy bursting out on his right by the rear of the Nine-mile road, and another heavy column moving towards Fair Oaks Station. This was Smith's column, which had at length got fairly to work. Couch, who had been reenforced by two additional regiments, made fight, but was overpowered and thrown off eccentrically to the right,—the enemy penetrating between the force with which Couch was executing this manœuvre and the main body of his division.* And now, between five and six o'clock, it seemed that the whole left wing of the army across the Chickahominy was doomed; for not only was Couch bisected, but the brigades of Berry and Jameson, of Kearney's division, which had gone up on the left, were thrown back by the enemy on White Oak Swamp, only regaining the main body under cover of night; and the centre was struggling with indifferent success to hold its own, after being driven from two positions. But just at this crisis, when the fate of the day was trembling in the balance, the action was determined by the sudden apparition of a column from the north bank of the Chickahominy.

Upon first learning the state of affairs on the left wing, McClellan sent orders to General Sumner, who held the centre of the general line of the army, on the north side of the Chickahominy, and about six miles from the scene of action, to hold his corps in readiness to move. But as soon as the sounds of battle from the west side of the Chickahominy reached† him, Sumner, divining the situation, had, with that soldierly instinct that characterized him, put his corps under arms, and marched it out of camp; so that when, at two o'clock, he was ordered to cross his command without delay, and proceed to the support of Heintzelman, no time was lost.

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* "In twenty minutes, the enemy had passed over the road leading to my centre, cutting me off from the rest of the division."—Couch: Report of Fair Oaks.

† "General Sumner, as soon as he heard the firing, and without waiting for orders, had put his troops under arms and marched them out of camp, thus saving an hour or so, which was of great service to us." Heintzelman's testimony in Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 351.

For the passage of the Chickahominy there were, at that time, only Bottom's Bridge, the railroad-bridge, and two bridges built by Sumner himself intermediate between the two above mentioned. But to reach the battle-field that day by Bottom's Bridge or the railroad-bridge was out of the question; his sole reliance, therefore, was on his own two bridges. Now, however, a new and dire difficulty presented itself: the lower bridge had been carried away by the freshet; the upper one was half adrift. When the head of Sumner's column, composed of Sedgwick's division, reached it, the rough logs forming the corduroy approaches over the swamp were mostly afloat, and were only kept from drifting off by the stumps of trees to which they were fastened. The portion over the body of the stream was suspended from the trunks of trees by ropes, on the doubtful staunchness of which depended the possibility of making the passage.

"The possibility of crossing," says Colonel Alexander of the engineers, "was doubted by all present, including General Sumner himself. As the solid column of infantry entered upon the bridge, it swayed to and fro to the angry flood below or the living freight above, settling down and grasping the solid stumps by which it was made secure, as the line advanced. Once filled with men, however, it was safe till the corps had crossed; it then soon became impassable."*

Sumner, debouching from the bridge with Sedgwick's division (Richardson's division did not arrive till about sunset), pushed impetuously forward through the deep mud, guided only by the firing. To move the artillery was found impossible.† At about six o'clock the head of Sedgwick's column‡ deployed into line in the rear of Fair Oaks, in a position where Couch, when separated from the main body, had taken his stand to oppose the enemy's advance. They were no more than in time; for at that moment Smith's troops,

* "The Peninsular Campaign:" Atlantic Monthly, March, 1864.

† Lieutenant Kirby, Company I, First United States Artillery, by fairly carrying his guns to firmer ground, succeeded in getting up his battery.

‡ Formed by Gorman's brigade.

having been gotten well in hand under the personal direction of General Johnston, moved forward, opening a heavy fusillade upon the line. They made several determined charges, but were each time repulsed with great loss by the steady fire of the infantry and the excellent practice of the batteries.* After sustaining the enemy's fire for a considerable time, General Sumner ordered five regiments† to make a charge with the bayonet into the woods occupied by the enemy. This operation was handsomely executed, and resulted in driving back the Confederates in confusion. Thus, when all was lost, Sumner's soldierly promptitude saved the day, as Moreau, flying to the assistance of Napoleon when hard pressed by the Austrians in Italy, chained victory to the standards of the French. "O Moreau!" exclaimed that illustrious war-minister Carnot, on hearing of this; "oh, my dear Fabius, how great you were in that circumstance! how superior to the wretched rivalries of generals, which so often cause the best-laid enterprises to miscarry!"‡ The brave old Sumner now sleeps in a soldier's grave; but that one act of heroic duty must embalm his memory in the hearts of his countrymen.

In this bloody encounter the Confederates lost nearly seven thousand men, and the Union army upwards of five thousand. But a severer loss befell the Confederates than is expressed even in this heavy aggregate; for the able chief of the Army of Northern Virginia was struck down with a severe hurt. The command, for the time being, devolved on General G. W. Smith; but the failure to make good the purpose of the attack, the heavy losses already suffered, and the disabling of

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* McClellan: Report, p. 110. General Johnston simply says: "The strength of the enemy's position enabled him to hold it till dark."

† The Thirty-fourth New York, Colonel Sinter; Eighty-second New York, Lieutenant-Colonel Hudson; Fifteenth Massachusetts, Lieutenant-Colonel Kimball; Twentieth Massachusetts, Colonel Lee; Seventh Michigan, Major Richardson—the three former of General Gorman's brigade, the latter two of General Dana's brigade.

‡ Alison: History of Europe, vol. iii., p. 327.

General Johnston, determined General Smith to retire his forces. Preparations for withdrawal were actively pushed forward during the night; but through some accidental circumstances, a portion of Sumner's line having become engaged on the morning of the 1st of June, there ensued a rencounter of some severity, which lasted for two or three hours. It ended, however, after some brisk sallies, in the withdrawal of the entire Confederate force to the lines around Richmond. The Union troops were immediately pushed forward, and occupied the positions held previous to the action.*

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* Through one of those odd freaks that sometimes overtake the record of military events, the history of the operation of the 1st of June has been made to assume a magnitude altogether beyond its real proportions. There are on record official reports and official testimony that would make one believe that the action on the morning following Fair Oaks assumed the volume of a battle—and a battle, too, if one were to credit the oft-recurring "bayonet charges," and attacks in solid column, of little less than first-class magnitude. There is little doubt, however, that these details are largely, if not altogether apochryphal. There was, indeed, a rencounter on the morning of the 1st, but it was the result not of a plan and purpose of aggressive action on the part of the Confederates, but an incident in the withdrawal of the enemy from the Union front. General Johnston has frequently expressed to the writer his amazement at the swelling bulk assumed by the "skirmish" of the 1st. Though not present, having been removed to Richmond after his hurt, General Johnston yet knew by constant reports from the field what was going on, and asserts that nothing more severe than an affair of the rear-guard took place. In his official report, General Johnston simply says: "Major-General Smith *was prevented from resuming his attack on the enemy's position next morning* by the discovery of strong intrenchments not seen on the previous evening. On the morning of June 1st the enemy attacked the brigade of General Pickett, which was supported by that of General Pryor. The attack was vigorously repelled by these two brigades, the brunt of the fight falling on General Pickett. This was the last demonstration made by the enemy. In the evening our troops quietly returned to their own camps."

V

THE SEVEN DAYS' RETREAT.

The attitude of the army during the month succeeding the action of Fair Oaks was not imposing. It was seemingly a body that had lost its momentum; and the troops, sweltering through all that hot month amid the unwholesome swamps of the Chickahominy, sank in energy McClellan's position was a trying one: he realized the full necessity of action; but he also realized better than any of his contemporaries the enormous difficulty of the task laid upon him. Feeling deeply the need of new accessions to his strength, in order to permit him to carry out his plans, and seeing almost as large a force as he had to confront the enemy with scattered in unmilitary positions throughout Virginia, he was naturally urgent that they should be forwarded from where they were useless to where they might be so advantageously employed.

Yet the situation was not one that permitted inaction; for the position of the army astride a fickle river, and the experience already had of the danger to which that division of its strength exposed it, should have been a sufficient admonition of the necessity of a change. The fundamental vice was the direction of McClellan's line of communications almost on the prolongation of his front of operations. Pivoting on the York River Railroad, and drawing his supplies from White House, it became absolutely necessary for him to hold a large part of his effective strength on the left bank of the Chickahominy for the protection of that line,—a situation that at once prevented his using his whole force, and exposed him to attack in detail. This false position might have been rectified in two ways: 1. By a change of base to the James, which would have given a line of manœuvre against Richmond, entirely free from the objections inherent in that by the York,

and whereon he would have had choice either of moving against Richmond by the north bank of the James, or, by a transfer to the south side, of operating against its communications, which was altogether the bolder and more decisive method; 2. By the transfer of the whole force to the right bank of the Chickahominy, abandoning the line of the York, and then making a prompt advance against Richmond, with the advantage that, if unsuccessful in the battle against the adverse force, the line of the James might be taken up. The latter was the preferable course, as it avoided the ill moral effect that might be expected to attend a change of base without a battle. But either would have been better than inaction, which, in the actual situation, was more hazardous than the boldest procedare, and was an eminent example of that kind of false prudence that is often the greatest rashness.

General McClellan knew that the adoption of the one course or the other was necessary; but unfortunately the case was one presenting an alternative, and it was the nature of that commander's mind to so balance between conflicting views, to so let "I dare not wait upon I would," that he was apt to hesitate even in conjunctures wherein the worst course was preferable to doing nothing. To whatever subtile cause, deep seated in the structure of his mind—to whatever excess of lymph in his blood this may have been due—it certainly marred his eminent capacity as a soldier. There is something painful and at the same time almost ludicrous in the evidence, found in his official dispatches, of this ever-about-to-do non-performance. On the day succeeding the action of Fair Oaks, the 2d of June, he wrote: "I only wait for the river to fall to cross with the rest of the force and make a general attack. Should I find them holding firm in a very strong position, I may wait for what troops I can bring up from Fort Monroe." On the 7th of June: "I shall be in perfect readiness to move forward and take Richmond the moment that McCall reaches here, and the ground will admit the passage of artillery." McCall's division (of McDowell's force) arrived on the 12th and 13th, which increased his

effective to one hundred and fifteen thousand men.* On the 16th he wrote: "I hope two days more will make the ground practicable. I shall advance as soon as the bridges are completed and the ground fit for artillery to move." On the 18th: "A general engagement may take place any hour." On the 25th: "The action will probably occur to-morrow, or within a short time,"—and so on and on in the like tenor, until the time when the enemy cut short the endless debate by seizing the initiative. Now it cannot be said that the obstacles indicated were not real difficulties in the way of an advance; that the successive conditions precedent of action were not well taken, and based on sound military reasoning. What General McClellan should have seen, however, is that his proper course of action was determined not by these circumstances at all, but was dictated by the necessity of extricating himself from a situation intrinsically false. This became only too soon manifest.

When the hurt that General Johnston had received at Fair Oaks was seen to be one that must long keep him out of the field, General Robert E. Lee was nominated to succeed him in the command of the Army of Northern Virginia. Of this soldier, destined to so large a fame, men had at this time to judge by promise rather than by proof. General Lee's actual experience in the field had been confined to a trivial campaign in the mountains of Western Virginia, in which he had been in a remarkable manner foiled by General Rosecrans; and this, with his reflective habits and cautious temper, promised a commander of the Fabian mould. Yet there is nothing in which one may more readily judge wrongly than in the attempt to prognosticate from the plane of every-day experience

* The rolls of the Army of the Potomac showed on the 26th of June the following figures: Total aggregate of present and absent, one hundred and fifty-six thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight; aggregate absent, twenty-nine thousand five hundred and eleven; aggregate on special duty, sick, etc., twelve thousand two hundred and twenty-five; aggregate present for duty, one hundred and fifteen thousand one hundred and two. Official Records: Adjutant General's Office.

the behavior of a man placed in command of an army. Lee, whose characteristic trait was caution, marked the commencement of his career by a stroke brilliant in its boldness.

It has been seen that in General Johnston's theory of action for the defence of Richmond, he judged that the course best suited to the circumstances was to draw in around the Confederate capital, concentrate there all the available resources of the South, and then fall with crushing weight upon the Union army, divided by the Chickahominy. Accidental circumstances had made the blow which he delivered ineffectual. General Lee determined to continue the same line of action; and this he was enabled to carry out under more favorable auspices. Johnston's views touching the necessity of a powerful gathering of force at Richmond fell comparatively unheeded; but his successor had better fortune, and having decided to assume the offensive, he was able to draw in the Confederate detachments scattered along the coast and throughout Virginia, and by this means raise his effective to near one hundred thousand men. Lee's policy of concentration included the withdrawal of Jackson's force from the Valley of the Shenandoah,—and a withdrawal so secret, that its first announcement should be the blow struck. Before commencing operations, however, he sent Stuart, with a body of fifteen hundred Virginia troopers, to make the circuit of the Union army, by a swoop around its rear. This having been successfully accomplished about the middle of June, Lee was ready, with the knowledge thus gained, to strike.

To mask Jackson's intended withdrawal from the Valley, General Lee detached a division from the force around Richmond (the division of Whiting) and sent it to join Jackson. This was done ostentatiously, and in such a way that it should become known to General McClellan; Lee judging that the intelligence of this movement would give his antagonist the impression of a revival of operations in the Shenandoah region. If there was, as seemed likely, a renewed intention of sending forward McDowell's army to join McClellan, a fresh appeal to the fears of the administration for the safety of

Washington was the shrewdly chosen means of again diverting that force.

When this had had its intended effect, Jackson, with his whole command, now raised to about twenty-five thousand men, was ordered to march rapidly and secretly in the direction of Richmond. He set out from the vicinity of Port Republic (where he had remained since the termination of the Valley campaign) on the 17th of June, and moving by way of Gordonsville and the line of the Virginia Central Railroad, pushed his advance so vigorously that on the 25th he struck Ashland, on the Fredericksburg Railroad, twelve miles from Richmond. With such skill did Jackson manage his march, that not General McClellan, nor yet Banks, nor Fremont, nor McDowell, knew aught of it;* and when, on the 25th, Jackson had reached Ashland, and was within striking distance of the right wing of the Army of the Potomac, McClellan, absorbed in his proposed operations on the Richmond side of the Chickahominy, was that very day advancing his pickets on the Williamsburg road, preparatory to a general forward movement in that direction. Jackson had now reached a point where the other Confederate columns could begin the parts assigned to them.

Lee's plan contemplated that as soon as Jackson, by his manœuvres on the north bank of the Chickahominy, should have uncovered the passage of the stream at Meadow and Mechanicsville bridges, the divisions on the south bank should cross and join Jackson's column, when the whole army should sweep down the north side of the Chickahominy, towards the York River, laying hold of McClellan's communications with White House.†

The only interference with this plan was caused by a day's delay in Jackson's movement whereby it occurred that

* A deserter from Jackson's force came into the Union lines on the 24th, and stated that Jackson was moving from Gordonsville, along the line of the Virginia Central Railroad, to strike the right of the Army of the Potomac; but his story was not credited.

† Lee: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 6.

when, on the afternoon of the 26th, General A. P. Hill, after crossing the Chickahominy at Meadow Bridge and driving away the small force* in observation at Mechanicsville (thus enabling the divisions of Longstreet and D. H. Hill to cross at Mechanicsville Bridge and join him), attempted to proceed in the movement down the north bank of the Chickahominy, the columns were brought to a halt by a part of the corps of Fitz-John Porter, which held an intrenched position on the left bank of Beaver Dam Creek, a small tributary of the Chickahominy. The position was a strong one, the left bank of the creek being high and almost perpendicular, and the approach being over open fields, swept by artillery fire and obstructed by abatis. This position was held by the brigades of Reynolds and Seymour; but when the Confederates showed a determination to force the passage, General Porter called up the remainder of his corps, consisting of Meade's brigade and the division of Morell. The Mechanicsville road, on which the Confederate divisions, under General Longstreet, moved to make the passage of Beaver Dam Creek, turns when near the creek and runs nearly parallel to it, thus causing an advancing force to present a flank. The Federal troops were concealed by earthworks commanding this road; and, reserving their fire until the head of the Confederate column was nearly across the ravine, they opened a terribly destructive volley in the face and on the flank of the advancing force: the survivors fled, and no additional attempt was made to force the passage that night; but brisk firing was continued till nine o'clock.† The enemy lost between three and four thousand men, while the Union loss was quite inconsiderable.‡

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* The force here consisted of a regiment and a battery.

† Porter: Report of Mechanicsville. This statement is fully borne out by Lee: "After sustaining a destructive fire of musketry and artillery, at short range, the troops," says he, "were withdrawn." Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 9.

‡ I derive this statement of the heavy Confederate loss from General Longstreet himself. It does not appear in the official reports, and is much larger than had hitherto been supposed.

The attempt was renewed at dawn of the following morning, with equally ill success; but while the Confederates were thus engaged, Jackson passed Beaver Dam Creek above and turned the position.

By the night of the 26th of June, the intelligence which McClellan received from his outposts left no doubt of Jackson's approach, and, divining now the true nature of Lee's move, he resolved to withdraw his right wing under General Porter from its position at Beaver Dam, where it was too far from the main body and too much "in the air." The answer to the question, what should be done with the right wing, would determine the entire situation.

The disclosure of Lee's bold initiative made action indispensable. Three courses were open to McClellan: 1. To effect a concentration of the whole army on the north side of the Chickahominy, and there deliver general battle; 2. To effect a concentration on the south bank, and march directly for Richmond; 3. To transfer the right wing to the south bank, and make a change of base to the James River.

The first plan was not conformable to military principles; for Lee already laid hold of McClellan's communications with White House, and the Confederate force on the Richmond side of the Chickahominy imperilled his line of retreat to the James River. To have given general battle on the north bank would, therefore, have been to risk his army without an assured line of retreat.*

The second project, that of making a counter-move on Richmond, would have been correct and at the same time very bold and brilliant. Such an operation has several illustrious precedents, of which one of the best known and most striking is Turenne's counter to Monte-

* This is something which even Napoleon was unwilling to do. Discussing the lines of conduct open to him after crossing the Alps into Italy, he says: "Of these three courses, the first—to march upon Turin—was contrary to the true principles of war, as the French *would run the risk of fighting without having a certain retreat*, Fort Bard not being then taken." Gourgaud and Montholon: Memoirs of Napoleon, vol. i., p. 276.

cuculi in 1675. Montecuculi, commanding the Imperial army, after a series of beautiful manœuvres, began to cross the Rhine at Strasburg for the purpose of falling upon the French force; but Turenne, nothing disconcerted, threw a bridge over the river three miles below Strasburg, and, transferring his whole army to German ground, compelled Montecuculi to make a hasty return. There is little doubt that a direct march of the whole army on Richmond on the morning of the 27th, would have had the effect to recall Lee to the defence of his own communications and the Confederate capital, which was defended by only twenty-five thousand men.* McClellan held the direct crossings of the Chickahominy on the south bank, while the Confederate bridges were destroyed, and Lee would have been compelled to make a detour of at least a day to rejoin the force in front of Richmond. Why, therefore, did not General McClellan execute this operation? He answers this question by a reference to the limited quantity of supplies on hand; but this cannot be accepted as valid, for the army had at this time rations for many days, and large stores had eventually to be burnt previous to the retreat. The real reason is, that the operation overleaped by its boldness the methodical genius of the Union commander.

It resulted, therefore, that he adopted the alternative of a change of base to the James River. In deciding upon this plan, which was judicious if not brilliant, and which was executed in a manner to reflect high credit on the army and its commander, the only sacrifice made by General McClellan —and indeed it was no inconsiderable one—was that he did on compulsion what he might have done before from

* General Magruder, who had command of the Confederate forces on the right bank of the Chickahominy, says: "I considered the situation of our army as *extremely critical and perilous*. The larger part of it was on the opposite side of the Chickahominy, the bridges had been all destroyed, but one was rebuilt, and there were but twenty-five thousand men between his—McClellan's—army of one hundred thousand men and Richmond." Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 191.

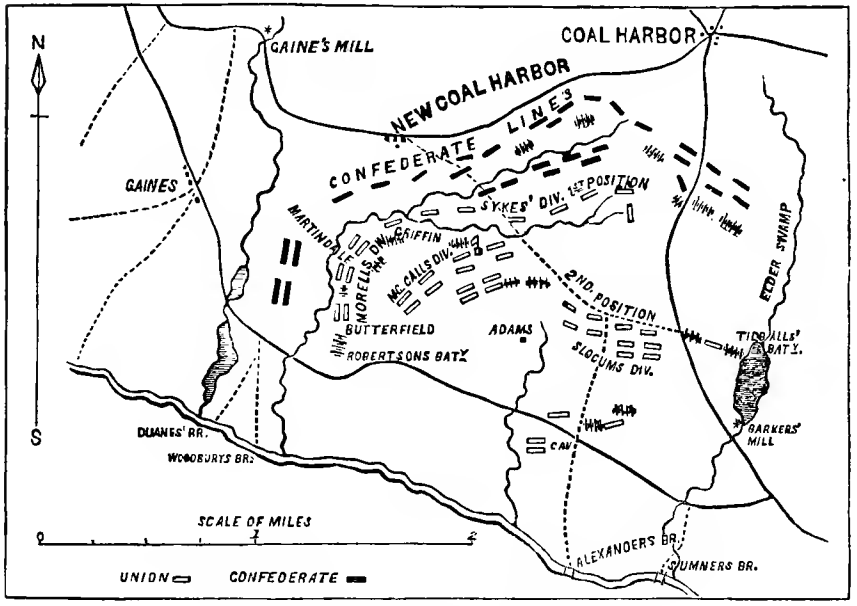
choice—what, indeed, he appears to have intended to do, but what, halting as that general so often did in the perilous half-way-house between the offensive and the defensive, never *was* done; thus turning awry the current of an enterprise of great pith and moment and losing the name of action.

In determining to withdraw Porter's corps to the south bank of the Chickahominy and effect with his united army a change of base to the James River, General McClellan took a preliminary step which, though seemingly dictated by the necessities of his difficult situation, enabled the Confederates to inflict a heavy blow on that corps, and beclouded the commencement of the retrograde movement by a severe disaster to the Union arms. It appeared that an immediate withdrawal of the right wing over the Chickahominy after Jackson had turned its position on Beaver Dam Creek would expose the rear of the army, placed as between two fires,* and enable Jackson by moving direct on the lower bridges of the Chickahominy, and even on Malvern Hill, to interrupt the movement to the James River. He resolved, therefore, to engage Jackson with Porter's corps, re-enforced by whatever troops might be available from the south bank of the Chickahominy, in order to cover the withdrawal of the trains and heavy guns and to gain time for arrangements looking to the change of base to the James. It was indeed an unhappy plight in which the commander found himself placed,—condemned either to hazard the safety of his whole army, or doom a portion of it to almost assured destruction. For it was not, as he conceived, with Jackson alone that Porter would have to deal, but with more than two-thirds of the entire Confederate army, with Jackson, and Longstreet, and the two Hills: it was in fact twenty-seven thousand against sixty thousand,—an overweight of opposition that lent to the task assigned to Porter almost the character of a forlorn hope.

In execution of this design, the greater part of the heavy guns and wagons were removed from Beaver Dam to the

* McClellan: Report, p. 125.

south bank of the Chickahominy during the night of the 26th; and shortly before daylight the delicate operation of withdrawing the troops to the position where it was determined to make the new stand, was commenced and skilfully and successfully executed; for, though the Confederates followed closely, skirmishing, yet Porter was able to take up his new position before they appeared in force in his front. The rear was handsomely covered by Seymour's brigade and the horse batteries of Robertson and Tidball.



SKETCH OF THE FIELD OF GAINES' MILL.

The position on the north bank of the Chickahominy taken up for resistance, was well chosen, on a range of heights between Cold Harbor and the Chickahominy. The line of battle formed the arc of a circle, covering the approaches to the bridges which connected the right wing with the troops on the south side of the river. The left (Morell's division) rested on a wooded bluff, which rose abruptly from a deep ravine leading down to the Chickahominy; the right (Sykes' division of Regulars) posted in woods and clearings, extended to the rear

of Cold Harbor. The ground, generally open in front, was bounded on the side of the Confederate approach by a wood with dense and tangled undergrowth and traversed by a sluggish stream. McCall's division was formed in a second line.* This field was destined to a historic character; for two years afterwards, General Grant, in his campaign from the Rapidan to Richmond, delivered a bloody battle on the same ground. Yet between the circumstances of the two battles, there was one point of difference; and it is a point of difference that epitomizes the whole progress of the war from 1862 to 1864. By the time Lee found himself on the defensive along the Chickahominy, a long experience had taught the enormous advantage of those rude breastworks of logs and earth, which the troops of both armies had acquired such a marvellous facility in constructing. But in the earlier action the art of preparing defensive positions was yet in its infancy, and the ground on which Porter disposed his force—a position that in two hours' vigorous use of the axe and spade might have been rendered impregnable—remained guarded by little more than the naked valor of the troops.

The dispositions had hardly been made, when at two o'clock General A. P Hill, who had the advance of Lee's column, swung round by New Cold Harbor, and advanced his division to the attack. Jackson, who was to form the left of the Confederate line, had not yet come up, and Longstreet was held back until Jackson's arrival on the left should compel an extension of the Federal line. Hill, accordingly, attacked alone; but he gained no advantage, for after piercing the line at one point, he was repulsed and forced to yield ground, his troops being driven back in great disorder and with heavy loss.† To re-

* Reynolds' brigade was posted on the extreme right to cover the approaches from Cold Harbor and Dispatch Station to Sumner's Bridge.

† Even a stronger statement than that above made would be justified by the Confederate official reports. Thus General Whiting says: "Men were leaving the field in every direction and in great disorder; two regiments, one from South Carolina and one from Louisiana, were actually marching back from the fire. Men were skulking from the front in a shameful manner." Re-

lieve Hill, the Confederate commander now ordered Longstreet, who held the right of the Confederate line, to make a feint on the left of the Union position; but Longstreet soon discovered that, owing to the strength of this point, the feint to be effective would have to be converted into a real attack.* While dispositions for this were in progress, Jackson's corps together with D. H. Hill's division arrived; and when dispositions had been completed, a general advance from right to left was made at six o'clock. Previous to this, General Porter, finding himself hard pressed, had called for re-enforcements, and in response, General McClellan, at half-past three, sent him Slocum's division of Franklin's corps, which increased his force to thirty-five thousand men. It was evident, however, that, beyond this, Porter could expect little or no aid, for the troops on the south bank of the Chickahominy had at the same time their attention fully engaged by the demonstrations of Magruder, who by energetic handling of his troops, making a great show and movement and clatter, held the corps commanders on the south side, to whom McClellan appealed for aid in behalf of Porter, so fully occupied that they declared they could with safety spare none.‡ And thus it happened that, while on the north side of the Chickahominy thirty thousand Union troops were being assailed by seventy thousand Confederates, twenty-five thousand Confederates on the south side held in check sixty thousand Union troops!

When, therefore, Lee, with all his divisions in hand, made a general advance, it was with an overwhelming weight and

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ports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 154. General Lee explains this by the statement that "most of these men had never been under fire till the day before." (Ibid., p. 8.) This furnishes an additional proof that Lee had been re-enforced by troops from the coast.

* "I found I must drive the enemy by direct assault, or abandon the idea of making the diversion. From the urgent nature of the message from the commanding general, I determined to change the feint into an attack." Report of Longstreet: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol i., p. 124.

† Sumner proffered two brigades, if General McClellan was willing he should intrust the defence of his position to his front line alone.

pressure. The right* held its ground with much stubbornness, repulsing every attack. The left, too, fought stoutly, but was at length broken by a determined charge, led by Hood's Texan troops. This, however, would not have sufficed to entail any great disaster; and Porter was withdrawing his infantry under cover of the fire of fifty guns, when the artillery on the height on the left was thrown into great confusion by a mass of cavalry rushing back from the front; and the batteries, being without support, retired in haste, overrunning the infantry, and throwing the whole mass into most admired disorder. The explanation of this is as follows. The cavalry had been directed to keep below the hill, and under no circumstances to appear on the crest, but to operate in the bottom land against the enemy's flank: nevertheless its commander, General Philip St. George Cook, doubtless misinformed, ordered it to charge between the infantry and artillery upon the enemy on the left, who had not yet emerged from the woods.† This charge, executed in the face of a withering fire, resulted, of course, in the cavalry's being thrown back in confusion; and the bewildered horses, regardless of the efforts of the riders, wheeled about, and dashing through the batteries, convinced the gunners that they were charged by the enemy. Jackson, following up, carried the height on the left by an impetuous rush of Longstreet's and Whiting's divisions, capturing fourteen pieces of artillery; and the Union division under Morell, which held that wing, was driven back to the woods on the banks of the Chickahominy.‡ The right con-

* The right wing was held by Sykes' division of Regulars and Griffin's brigade, and was subsequently re-enforced by Bartlett's brigade of Slocum's division.

† Porter: Report of Gaines Mill.

‡ Stonewall Jackson, in his official report of the battle of Gaines' Mill, gives the following spirited description of the decisive charge by Hood's and Law's brigades of Whiting's division, which resulted in carrying the fortified crest on the Union left: "Dashing on with unfaltering step in face of those murderous discharges of canister and musketry, General Hood and Colonel Law, at the head of their respective brigades, rushed to the charge with a yell. Moving down a precipitous ravine, leaping ditch and stream, clambering up a difficult

tinued to maintain its ground against the attacks of Ewell's and D. H. Hill's divisions; but the key-point being carried, retreat was compulsory. This was attended with much confusion, and the stragglers were thronging to the bridge, when French's and Meagher's brigades, sent across from the south side of the river by General Sumner, appeared, and under cover of their firm line the shattered troops were finally rallied and reformed. Yet, if alone on that small re-enforcement had depended the safety of that terribly shattered wing, hope would have been slender indeed; but the growing darkness, the disorder which lines of battle necessarily suffer in charging over thickly wooded ground, and the severe punishment the Confederates had received, prevented Lee from pushing his victory to the dreadful extremity to which that routed force, with a river at its back, was exposed. Thus, when friendly night—so often awaited with such passionate longing by wrecked armies and distraught commanders—shut down on the dark and bloody thickets of the Chickahominy, the worn and weary troops were silently drawn over to the south bank, and at six of the morning the rear-guard of Regulars crossed and destroyed the bridge behind them. The losses numbered many thousands on each side, but no precise aggregate is known.*

With the transfer of the right wing to the south side of the Chickahominy, the Army of the Potomac turned its back on the Confederate capital and all the high hopes the advance had inspired. It was no longer a question of taking Rich-

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ascent, and exposed to an incessant and deadly fire from the intrenchments, these brave and determined men pressed forward, driving the enemy from his well-selected and fortified position. In this charge—in which upwards of a thousand men fell, killed and wounded, and in which fourteen pieces of artillery and nearly a regiment were captured—the Fourth Texas, under the lead of General Hood, was the first to pierce the stronghold and seize the guns."—Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 133.

* No estimates whatever are given either by General McClellan or General Porter. Jackson states his loss at three thousand two hundred and eighty-four; and in the same proportion for the other corps, it would put the Confederate casualties at above ten thousand.

mond, but of making good the retreat to the James, with a victorious enemy in the rear. McClellan had still, however, a certain advantage of his opponent: he had a determinate course of action resolved on during the night of the 27th, and already in process of execution; while Lee remained still in doubt as to his adversary's design. He saw that McClellan might still throw his united force to the north side of the Chickahominy and give battle to preserve his communications by the White House; and he saw that, holding the lower bridges of the Chickahominy, he might retreat down the Peninsula over the same route by which Johnston retreated up the Peninsula. In either case, it was necessary to hold his entire force in hand on the north side of the river. Yet McClellan had adopted neither of these courses, but one different from either, and which his adversary had not divined. And thus it happened that when, on the day after the battle of the Chickahominy—Sunday, the 28th of June—Lee threw forward Ewell's division and Stuart's cavalry corps to seize the York River Railroad, he discovered he had been anticipated; for the line of supplies by the York River Railroad had been already abandoned two days before, the water-transportation had been ordered round to the James River, the vast supplies had been run across to the south side of the Chickahominy, and the enemy on his arrival found nothing save the burning piles in which the remnant of stores it had been impossible to carry off were being consumed. In fact, the army was rapidly in motion for the James River; and so skilfully was the retreat masked by the troops holding the line of works on the Richmond side of the Chickahominy, that Magruder and Huger, who had been charged with the duty of watching closely the movements of the Union force, were quite unaware of what was going on. "Late in the afternoon (of the 28th) the enemy's works," says General Lee, "were reported to be fully manned. The strength of these fortifications prevented Generals Huger and Magruder from discovering what was passing in their front." It was night, in fact, before the movement was disclosed; and next morning (29th), before Longstreet

and Hill and Jackson could be sent across to the south side of the Chickahominy, and, with Huger and Magruder, put in pursuit, McClellan had gained twenty-four hours—hours of infinite price in the execution of his delicate and difficult enterprise.

The line of retreat to the James passes across White Oak Swamp, and the difficulty of the passage for the retreating army with its enormous trains was, at least, partially compensated by the barrier it opposed to reconnoissances and flank attacks by the pursuing foe. Keyes' corps, which had been holding a position on the margin of White Oak Swamp, naturally took the advance, and, traversing this region, had by noon of the 28th seized strong positions on the opposite side to cover the passage of the troops and *impedimenta*. Then followed the long train of five thousand wagons, with a herd of twenty-five hundred beef-cattle, all of which had to traverse the morass by the one narrow defile. It was successfully accomplished, however, and, during the same night, Porter's corps headed towards the James. Meanwhile, to allow the trains to get well on their way, Sumner's corps and Heintzelman's corps and Smith's division of Franklin's corps were ordered to remain on the Richmond side of the White Oak Swamp during the whole of the 29th and until dark, in a position covering the roads from Richmond, and covering also Savage Station on the railroad.

Upon learning definitely the withdrawal of the army, Lee, on the morning of the 29th, put his columns in motion in pursuit. Magruder and Huger were ordered to follow up on the Williamsburg and Charles City roads, while Longstreet and A. P. Hill were to cross the Chickahominy at New Bridge, and move by flank routes near the James, so as to intercept the retreat; and Jackson, making the passage at Grape-vine Bridge, was to sweep down the south bank of the Chickahominy.

Now, when Sumner, on the morning of the 29th, learnt that the enemy was recrossing the Chickahominy and advancing in the direction of Savage Station, he moved his corps from

the position it had held at Allen's farm to that place, uniting there with Smith's division of Franklin's corps. Heintzelman, who held position on the left of Sumner, had been ordered to hold the Williamsburg road; but, when Sumner shifted his force on to Savage Station, Heintzelman fell back entirely and crossed White Oak Swamp. Thus, when Magruder pushed forward on the Williamsburg road, he found, in consequence of Heintzelman's withdrawal, no force to oppose; and Sumner, who was not aware of Heintzelman's retirement, was surprised to find the enemy debouching on his front at Savage Station. Such were the circumstances that, on the afternoon of the 29th, brought on the action known as the battle of Savage Station,—an action that forms the second of the series of blows dealt by Lee on the retreating army in its arduous passage to the James.

Magruder attacked in front with characteristic impetuosity, about four in the afternoon, momentarily expecting that Jackson, whose route led to the flank and rear of Savage Station, would arrive to decide the action. But Jackson was delayed nearly all day by the rebuilding of the bridge over the Chickahominy, and did not get up, and Sumner held his own with the stubbornness that marked that soldier; so that Magruder, assailing his position in successive charges till dark, met only bloody repulses. Thus, stout Sumner stood at bay, while, thanks to the barrier he opposed, the mighty caravan of artillery and wagons and ambulances moved swiftly, silently through the melancholy woods and wilds, all day and all night, without challenge or encounter, on its winding way to the James. During the night, the rear-guard also withdrew across White Oak Swamp.*

By the morning of the 30th, the army, with all its belongings, had crossed White Oak Swamp, and debouched into the region looking out towards the James; the artillery-parks

* By orders from General McClellan, Sumner was under the sad necessity of leaving behind at Savage Station the general hospital, containing twenty-five hundred sick and wounded men.

had gained Malvern Hill, and the van of the army had already reached the river, the sight of which was greeted with something of the joy with which the Ten Thousand, returning from the expedition immortalized by Xenophon, hailed the Sea.

The Confederate pursuit was made in two columns. Jackson, with five divisions, pressed on the heels of the retreating army by way of White Oak Swamp; while Longstreet, with a like force, making a detour by the roads skirting the James River, hurried forward with the view to cut off the column from its march. But, as long as the two Confederate columns were thus placed, it is obvious that they were hopelessly separated, and the retreating army had less to fear from their partial blows. Just as soon, however, as Jackson should emerge from White Oak Swamp, he would come in immediate communication with the force under Longstreet, and the whole of Lee's army would then be united. To prevent this junction, so as to make time for the ongoing of the menaced and jealously guarded trains, became now the prime object. And this necessity it was that gave rise to the next serious encounter, known as the battle of Glendale or Newmarket cross-roads.

By noon of the 30th, Jackson reached the White Oak Swamp; but he found the bridge destroyed, and on attempting to pass by the ordinary place of crossing, the head of his column was met by a severe artillery fire from batteries on the other side. He then essayed to force the passage; but each attempt was met with such determined opposition* that, obstructed in his design, he was compelled to give over. Meantime, the column of Longstreet, whose line of march flanked the swamp and gave free motion, was pushing rapidly forward on the Long Bridge or New Market road, which runs at right angles to the Quaker road, on which the army and its trains were hurrying towards the James. At the very

* The crossing was held by General Franklin, with the divisions of Smith and Richardson and Naglee's brigade. Captain Ayres directed the artillery.

time Jackson was arrested at White Oak Swamp, Longstreet had arrived within a mile of the point of intersection of these two roads. Should he be able to seize it, the army would be cut in twain. But Longstreet found this important point already covered, and if gained it would be at the price of a battle. The force at the point of contact was McCall's division of Pennsylvania Reserves, formed at right angles across the New Market road, in front of, and parallel to, the Quaker road.* Sumner was at some distance to the left, and somewhat retired; Hooker was on Sumner's left, and somewhat advanced; Kearney was to the right of McCall. The brunt of the attack, however, fell upon McCall's division. In the Confederate line the division of Longstreet held the right, and that of A. P Hill the left. Longstreet opened the attack at about three o'clock, by a threatening movement on McCall's left, which was met by a change of front on that flank, in which position a severe fight was maintained for two hours, the Confederates making ineffectual attempts to force the position. At the same time the batteries on the centre and right became the aim of determined assaults, which were repeatedly repulsed; till finally Randol's battery was captured by a fierce charge made by two regiments† advancing in wedge shape, without order, but with trailed arms. Rushing up to the muzzles of the guns, they pistoled or bayoneted the cannoniers. The greater part of the supporting regiment fled; but those who remained made a savage hand to hand and bayonet fight over the guns,‡ which were finally yielded

* McCall's disposition was as follows: Meade's brigade on the right, Seymour's on the left, and Simmons' (Reynolds') in reserve. Randol's (Regular) battery in front of the line on the right, Cooper's and Kern's opposite the centre, and Dietrich's and Kennerheim's (twenty-pounder Parrotts) on the left.

† These regiments were the Fifty-fifth and Sixtieth Virginia.

‡ "The Sixtieth Virginia crossed bayonets with the enemy, who obstinately contested the possession of these guns." Report of General A. P Hill: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 177.

General McCall is more magniloquent in his account: "Bayonets were crossed and locked in the struggle; bayonet wounds were freely given and received. I saw skulls crushed by the heavy blow of the butt of the musket; and in

to the enemy. Meantime, a renewed attempt on the left shattered and doubled up that flank, held by Seymour's brigade; and the enemy following up, drove the routed troops between Sumner and Hooker, till, penetrating too far, he was caught himself on the flank by Hooker's fire, and, driven across Sumner's front, was thrown against McCall's centre, which, with the right, had remained comparatively firm. An advance by Kearney and Hooker now regained a portion of the lost ground, and repulsed all further attacks. Darkness coming on, ended the action.

While these events were passing at Glendale, Jackson, detained by the vigorous opposition he met on the other side of White Oak Swamp, could only hear the tell-tale guns: he was impotent to help.* Thus it was that McClellan, holding paralyzed, as it were, the powerful corps of Jackson with his right hand, with his left was free to deal blows at the force menacing his flanks. The action at Glendale insured the integrity of the army, imperilled till that hour. During the night the troops that had checked Jackson and repulsed Longstreet silently withdrew, and when Lee was next able to strike it was at a united army, strongly posted on the heights of Malvern, with assured communication with its new base on the James.

On the following morning (July 1st) Lee had his whole force concentrated at the battle-field of New Market cross-roads: but he could not fail even then to realize that, though the pursuit might be continued, it was under circumstances that made the hope of any decided success now very distant.

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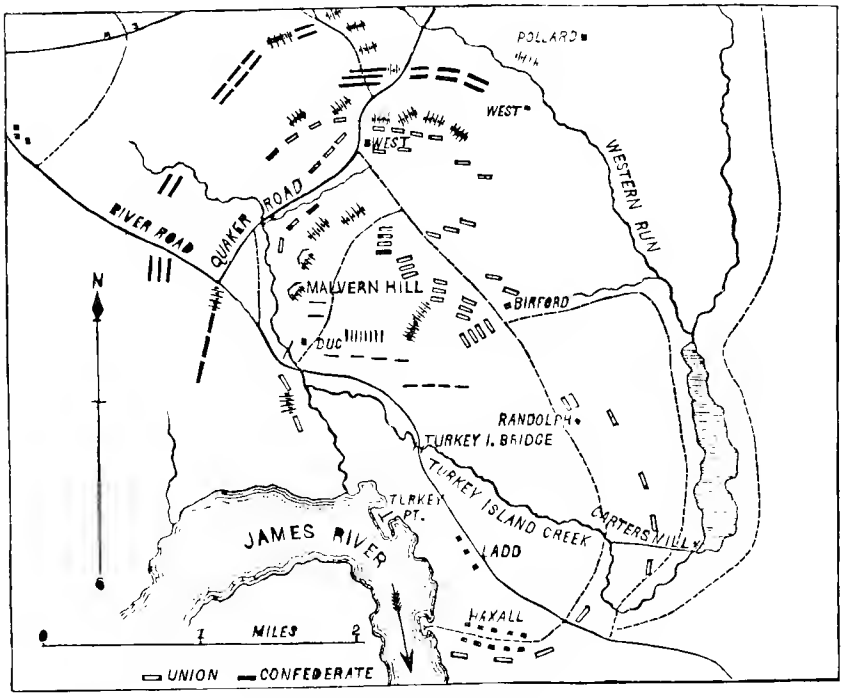
short, the desperate thrusts and parries of a life and death encounter, proving indeed that *Greek had met Greek when the Alabama boys fell upon the sons of Pennsylvania.*" McCall's Report: Pennsylvania Reserves in the Peninsula, pamphlet, p. 5.

* "A heavy cannonading in front announced the engagement of General Longstreet at Frazier's farm, and made me eager to press forward, but the marshy character of the soil, the destruction of the bridge over the marsh and creek, and the strong position of the enemy for defending the passage, prevented my advancing till the following morning." Jackson's Report: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 134.

Still it remained to try the issue of a general battle between the two united armies. The Confederate columns were accordingly put in motion on the morning of the 1st of July, Jackson's corps leading. A march of a few miles brought the pursuers again in contact with the army, which was found occupying a commanding ridge, extending obliquely across



SKETCH OF MALVERN HILL.

the line of march, in advance of Malvern Hill. In front of this strong position the ground was open, varying in width from a quarter to half a mile, sloping gradually from the crest, and giving a free field of fire. The approaches were over a broken and thickly wooded country, traversed nearly throughout its whole extent by a swamp passable at but few places, and difficult at those.* On this admirable position General McClellan had concentrated his army, prepared to receive final battle.

* Lee's Report: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 12.

The left and centre were posted on Malvern Hill, an elevated plateau about a mile and a half by three-fourths of a mile in area; the right was "refused," curving backward through a wooded region towards a point below Haxall's Landing, on James River. Judging from the obvious lines of attack that the main effort would be made against his left, General McClellan posted on Malvern Hill heavy masses of infantry and artillery. Porter's corps held the left, and the artillery of his two divisions, with the artillery reserve, gave a concentrated fire of sixty guns. Couch's division was placed on the right of Porter; next came Kearney and Hooker; next, Sedgwick and Richardson; next, Smith and Slocum; then the remainder of Keyes' corps, extending by a backward curve nearly to the river. While the left was massed, the right was more deployed, its front covered by slashings. The gunboats in the James River protected the left flank.*

Lee formed his line with Jackson's divisions† on the left, and those under Magruder and Huger on the right. A. P Hill and Longstreet were held in reserve to the left, and took no part in the engagement.‡ Owing to ignorance of the

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* McClellan's Report, p. 138.

† Divisions of Jackson, Ewell, Whiting, and D. H. Hill.

‡ General McClellan, mistaking the movements of these two divisions, fell into an erroneous apprehension regarding the part they played in the battle. In his Report (p. 139) he says: "About two o'clock a column of the enemy was observed moving towards our right. Arrangements were at once made to meet the anticipated attack in that quarter; but though the column was long, occupying two hours in passing, it disappeared, and was not again heard of. *The presumption is that it retired by the rear, and participated in the attack afterwards made on our left.*" This was the column of Longstreet and A. P Hill, getting into its position in reserve on the Confederate left; but, as above stated, it took no part in the action. During the battle, the observed movement of this column gave McClellan great concern for his right, as he conceived it was making a detour with the view to fall upon that flank; and this caused him to remain on his right. "My apprehensions," he says, "were for the extreme right. I felt no concern for the left and centre."—Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 437. Such troublesome errors are the necessary result of the nature of such a theatre of war as that on which the two armies were operating,

country on the part of the Confederates, and the difficulty of the ground, the line was not formed until late in the afternoon, though a brisk artillery duel was kept up, and about three o'clock a single brigade (Anderson's, of D. H. Hill's division) attacked Couch's front and was repulsed.* As McClellan expected, Lee's purpose was to force the plateau of Malvern on the left. With this view he had massed Jackson's force and the troops under Huger and Magruder well on his right, being resolved to carry the heights by storm. Previously to the attack, the Confederate commander issued an order stating that positions were selected from which his artillery could silence that of his opponent, and as soon as that was done, Armistead's brigade of Huger's division would advance with a shout and carry the battery immediately in his front. This shout was to be the signal for a general advance, and all the troops were then to rush forward with fixed bayonets. Now towards six o'clock, General D. H. Hill, commanding one of Jackson's divisions, heard what he took to be the signal. "While conversing with my brigade commanders," says he, "shouting was heard on our right, followed by the roar of musketry We all agreed this was the signal determined upon, and I ordered my division to advance. This, as near as I could judge, was about an hour and a half before sundown."† But whether the others did not hear what Hill heard, or whether what they heard was not taken for the signal, no advance by them was made; so that when Hill went forward, it was *alone*. Neither Whiting on the left, nor Magruder or Huger on the right, moved forward an inch. Hill's point of attack was directly against the crest of Malvern, bristling with cannon. "Tier after tier of batteries," says he, "were grimly visible on the plateau, rising in the form of an amphitheatre." In such cases, where cannoniers stand to

* This repulse was determined by the excellent practice of Kingsbury's battery, together with the steady fire of the Tenth Massachusetts and a charge of the Thirty-sixth New York—the latter regiment capturing the colors of the Fourteenth North Carolina in a hand-to-hand conflict.

† Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 186.

their guns, and faithful hands grasp the rifle, it is easy to predict the result. Every assault met a bloody repulse. The promised artillery aid was not rendered: the few batteries used were beaten in detail.* Afterwards, Magruder and Huger attacked, but it was without order or *ensemble*, a brigade, or even a regiment, being thrown forward at a time. Each, in succession, met a like reception from the steady lines of infantry and the concentrated fire from the artillery reserve, under its able commander, Colonel Hunt. The attacks fell mainly on Porter on the left, and on Couch; and the success of the day was in a large degree due to the skill and coolness of the latter, who, as holding the hottest part of the Union line, was gradually re-enforced by the brigades of Caldwell, Sickles, Meagher, and several of Porter's, till he came to command the whole left centre, displaying in his conduct of the battle a high order of generalship.

Night closed on the combatants still fighting, the opposing forces being distinguishable only by the lurid lines of fire. Thus till near nine o'clock, when the fire, slackening gradually, died out altogether, and only an occasional shot from the batteries broke the silence that pervaded the bloody field. The repulse of the Confederates was most complete, and entailed a loss of five thousand men, while the Union loss was not above one-third that number. Lee never before nor since that action delivered a battle so ill-judged in conception, or so faulty in its details of execution. It was as bad as the worst blunders ever committed on the Union side; but he profited by the experiment, and never repeated it.

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* "Instead of ordering up one or two hundred pieces of artillery to play on the Yankees, a single battery was ordered up and knocked to pieces in a few minutes; one or two others shared the same fate of being beaten in detail. The firing from our batteries was of the most farcical character."—Report of General D H. Hill: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 186. General Lee says: "The obstacles presented by the woods and swamps made it impracticable to bring up a sufficient amount of artillery to oppose successfully the extraordinary force of that arm employed by the enemy."—Ibid., p. 12 See also report of General Pendleton, Chief of Artillery, Ibid., p. 227.

Victorious though the Army of the Potomac was on the field of Malvern, the position was not one that could be held; for the army was under the imperious necessity of reaching its supplies. During the night, accordingly, the troops were withdrawn to Harrison's Bar, on the James. Colonel Averill, with a regiment of cavalry, a brigade of regular infantry, and a battery, covered the rear. Lee threw forward Stuart (who with his troopers had been absent during the whole pursuit on an expedition to White House and the lower fords of the Chickahominy, and only rejoined the army after the battle of Malvern), and followed up with columns of infantry; but finding that McClellan had taken up a strong position, he retired on the 8th of July, and took his army back to Richmond.

Thus ended the memorable peninsular campaign, which, in the brief interval of three months, had seen the Army of the Potomac force its way through siege and battle to within sight of the spires of Richmond, only to reel back in the deadly clinch of a seven days' combat to the James River.

Viewed with reference to its aim—the capture of Richmond—the campaign was a failure, as were so many subsequent campaigns having the same object in view. The judgments of men, accordingly, have turned rather on the result than on the causes that produced it. The theory of the campaign, primarily offensive, from necessity changed into the defensive. The theory of the Confederates, primarily defensive, was skilfully converted into the offensive. Thus the prestige remained with the Confederates; and the faults of Lee's offensive receive as little attention as the merits of McClellan's defensive. For, in an unsuccessful campaign, the slightest fault is accounted mortal. Men regard only the ill that has happened, and not the worse that might have happened had it not been prevented. In a fortunate issue, however, the eyes of the public, dazzled by the glitter of a brilliant achievement, are blind both to the faults of what has been gained and to the failure to gain much besides. Lee

himself, conscious of the skilful manner in which his antagonist parried his blows, attempts to explain the failure to achieve a more decisive result by the enumeration of obstructions which, as they beset McClellan himself, can hardly be considered a valid explanation. "Under ordinary circumstances," says he, "the Federal army should have been destroyed. Its escape was due to the causes already stated. Prominent among these is the want of correct and timely information. This fact, attributable chiefly to the character of the country, enabled General McClellan skilfully to conceal his retreat, and to add much to the obstructions with which nature had beset our pursuing columns."*

The losses of the campaign were, on the Union side, 15,249; on the Confederate side, above 19,000. The blows dealt by each were not less severe than the blows received by each. In a military sense, Richmond's danger was really greater when, after its retreat, the Army of the Potomac based itself on the James, than when it stood astride the Chickahominy. Yet, so potent is the sway that general results have over the imaginations of men, that, while the raising of the siege was the occasion to Jefferson Davis for a proclamation of thanksgiving, and thrilled the whole South with joy, the North was stunned with grief and despair at the thought that the army that was the brave pillar of its hopes was thus struck down.

It is true these moral results count for much in war, and the historian must not fail duly to note and weigh them. Yet if, anticipating the spirit of a historical judgment, we essay to estimate the events of the war by their intrinsic value, we shall not fail to see something meritorious, as well as something blameworthy, in this unsuccessful campaign. For the commander to have extricated his army from a difficult situation, in which circumstances quite as much as his own fault had placed it, and, in presence of a powerful, skilful, and determined adversary, to have transferred it to a position

* Lee: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 14.

whence it could act with effect, was of itself a notable achievement. For the army to have fought through such a campaign was creditable, and its close found inexperienced troops transformed into veteran soldiers. And, if alone from the appeal which great sufferings and great sacrifices always make to a generous people, the story of that eventful march and arduous retreat, when, weary and hungry and foot-sore, the army marched by night and fought by day through a whole week of toil, and never gave up, but made a good fight and reached the goal, cannot fail to live in grateful remembrance.

V

POPE'S CAMPAIGN IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA.

AUGUST, 1862.

I.

REMOVAL OF THE ARMY FROM THE PENINSULA.

IT will have appeared from the exposition of the motives that prompted the change of base, that, in transferring the Army of the Potomac to the James River, the fundamental idea of its commander was to secure a line of operations whereby, with a refreshed and re-enforced army, a new campaign, under more promising auspices, might be undertaken. The position of the army, at once threatening the communications of Richmond and enabling it to spring on the rear of the Confederate force should it attempt an aggressive movement northward, seemed the most advantageous possible, whether for offensive operations or for insuring the safety of the national capital. General McClellan brought back to Harrison's Landing between eighty-five thousand and ninety thousand men; and his view was, that all the resources at the command of the Government should be at once forwarded to him. Having the James River now open as a line of supplies, he had formed the bold design of transferring the Army of the Potomac to the south bank of that river, and operating against the communications of Richmond by way of Petersburg.*

* That this was General McClellan's purpose is vouched for by no less an authority than General Halleck, who, in a memorandum of a visit to the headquarters of the Army of the Potomac, at Harrison's Landing, on the 25th of

There appears to have been at first an intention on the part of the Administration to adopt this judicious course; but a train of events, partly the work of man and partly the effect of circumstances, presently arose, that not only frustrated this design, but removed the army wholly from the Peninsula, and transferred the theatre of operations to the front of Washington and then to the soil of the loyal States. What these events were I shall now set forth.

Just before the commencement of Lee's offensive operations, the military councils at Washington, taught a lesson by the events of Jackson's campaign in the Shenandoah Valley, had gathered together the disjointed fag-ends of armies in Northern Virginia under McDowell and Banks and Fremont, and had consolidated them into the "Army of Virginia," which was intrusted to the command of Major-General John Pope.* That officer brought with him from the West, where he had held command under General Halleck, the reputation for a species of aggressive energy that was supposed to characterize the Western style of warfare, in contradistinction to the methodical campaigning of the East,† and he signalized his advent

July, 1862, says: "I stated to him [McClellan] that the object of my visit was to ascertain from him his views and wishes in regard to future operations. He said that he proposed to *cross the James River at that point* [Harrison's Landing. General Grant, two years afterwards, crossed a few miles below], *attack Petersburg, and cut off the enemy's communications by that route South*, making no further demonstration, for the present, against Richmond. *I stated to him very frankly my views in regard to the danger and impracticability of the plan*," etc. (Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 454.) It would appear that General Grant had less respect for General Halleck's views of "the danger and impracticability of the plan," seeing that two years afterwards he adopted that precise plan, and took Richmond and destroyed Lee by it! Nor can it be said that circumstances, so far as regards the defence of Washington, differed in the one case from those in the other—excepting that they were such as to warrant the adoption of the plan by General McClellan much more than by General Grant—for in 1862 there were ten men left behind for the defence of Washington to one in 1864.

* The appointment of General Pope to the command of the "Army of Virginia" bears date the 26th of June, the day before the battle of Gaines' Mill.

† This supposed distinction between the Western and Eastern mode of making war is thus expressed in Pope's address to his army: "I have come to you

to command by the promulgation of a pseudo-Napoleonic proclamation, in which he expressed his contempt for "certain phrases he found much in vogue, such as bases of supplies, and lines of retreat,"—phrases which he enjoined his army to discard as unworthy of soldiers destined to follow the leadership of one who had never seen any thing but the "backs of his enemies." Underneath all its bombastic nonsense, Pope's proclamation contained one grain of sense, which was the rebuke it gave the ignorant use of military terms common at the North; and though there was an execrable want of taste in the pointed satire directed at McClellan's methodical tactics, there is no doubt that the declaration of a more vigorous war-policy quite met the views of the mass of the people.

In assigning Pope to the command of the "Army of Virginia," although his first duty was to cover Washington, yet his ultimate object and avowed purpose was to take Richmond by an overland advance; and he had charmed the ears of the members of the Committee on the Conduct of the War by his facile expositions of the manner in which he meant to "lie off on the flanks of the rebels," and even—had he only such an army as McClellan's—march straight to New Orleans!* Before General Pope could set out in the execution of this design, however, there occurred the series of events culminating in the retreat of the Army of the Potomac.

No sooner had this taken place, than the powerful faction opposed to McClellan and his plan of campaign, united in bringing to bear on the President a weighty "pressure" for the removal of the Army of the Potomac from the Pen-

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from the West, where we have always seen the backs of the enemies—from an army *whose business it has been to seek the adversary, and to beat him when found;* whose policy has been attack and not defence. I presume I have been called here to pursue the same system."

* "*Question.* Suppose that you had the army that was here on the 1st day of March last, do you suppose you would find any obstacle to prevent your marching from here to New Orleans?

"*Pope. I should suppose not.*" Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 282.

insula. Among the strongest in urging this measure was General Pope, who, as soon as the intelligence of McClellan's retreat to the James River was received, began to play upon the fears of the Administration touching the safety of Washington. To the President he expressed the opinion that McClellan's supplies would certainly be cut off;* pointed out that co-operation between the Army of Virginia and the Army of the Potomac, in their then situations, was next to impossible; and strongly urged the recall of McClellan's force to the front of Washington.†

It happened, too, that at this crisis those who were urging these views received a powerful re-enforcement in the person of General Halleck, who had about this time been recalled from his Western field of operations and placed in supreme command of all the armies in the field by his appointment to the office of general-in-chief,—an office which, to the incalculable obstruction of the conduct of the war and the intolerable annoyance of every general commanding the Army of the Potomac, he continued to hold till "pushed from his stool" by the elevation, two years afterwards, of General Grant to the lieutenant-generalship.

General Halleck added his strident voice in favor of the withdrawal of the army from the Peninsula, although, owing to a sincere anxiety now cherished by Mr. Lincoln that General McClellan should be allowed his "own way," he was not at first able to make the order imperative. The President, in response to General McClellan's appeals for re-enforcements to enable him to renew operations against Richmond, had promised him an addition to his strength of twenty thousand men, to be drawn from Burnside's command in North Carolina and Hunter's command in South Carolina. With this re-enforcement, McClellan expressed his readiness to renew operations, and he had proceeded to make a reconnoissance in force with the divisions of Hooker and Sedgwick, who ad-

* Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 279.

† Ibid., p. 279.

vanced and reoccupied Malvern, when he was met by a telegram from the new general-in-chief, dated August 3d, ordering him to withdraw the entire army from the Peninsula to Aquia Creek, there to make a junction with Pope. After an urgent appeal from this order, General McClellan proceeded to carry out his instructions.

The judgment of the act that removed the Army of the Potomac from the Peninsula must turn on the one fact, whether or not it was really designed to re-enforce that army. If it was not designed to re-enforce it to an effective that would enable it to immediately recommence active operations, then undoubtedly the wisest course was to withdraw it from the Peninsula; for a concentration of the divided forces was so prime a necessity, that if a junction of the two armies was not to be allowed on the James, a junction in front of Washington was preferable to their continued isolation,—a situation in which neither could operate with much effect.*

If, however, there had been on the part of the Administration any intention of giving effect to the views of General McClellan, by furnishing such accessions to his strength as would permit his moving upon Richmond, the army should assuredly have remained on the line of the James.

Now, it is a curious circumstance, that at this time there was another person full as anxious as General Halleck to have the Army of the Potomac leave the Peninsula. That person was General Lee. And if there be any force in that military maxim, which admonishes "never to do what the

* There is another consideration that prompted certain officers of the army to urge the removal of the army from the Peninsula, if it was not to be re-enforced; and that is the unhealthy situation in which the army would find itself lying in inaction amid the swamps of the James during the hot months of August and September. This was the reason why several of the officers of the Army of the Potomac—among them Generals Franklin and Newton—expressed to President Lincoln, during a visit he made to McClellan's camp in July, 1862, an opinion in favor of withdrawing the army from the Peninsula. I make this statement on the authority of the officers named. If re-enforcements were to be expected, they were altogether in favor of remaining

enemy wants you to do," this notable coincidence should raise grave suspicions touching the wisdom of a measure in which the opposing chiefs were in such entire harmony

To dislodge the army from its threatening position on the James, Lee determined to menace its communications; and with this view he moved a force to the south bank of the James, seized a position immediately opposite Harrison's Landing, placed forty-three guns in position, and on the 31st of July opened fire on the shipping.* This did little damage, however, and on the following morning General McClellan threw a force across the river, seized the position—Coggin's Point—fortified it, and was never troubled more. But little did the Confederate commander dream, when he was thus laboring to cause McClellan to withdraw, that the general-in-chief of the United States army was co-operating to the same end. Moreover, it happened that, while General Halleck was willing to remove the army from the Peninsula before Lee made any effort with the same view, a certain measure taken by the Confederate commander with an entirely different aim, greatly expedited the withdrawal. For the just appreciation of this it will be necessary to glance a moment at General Pope's contemporaneous operations in Northern Virginia.

Upon assuming command of the Army of Virginia, General Pope, whose military conduct was considerably sounder than his military principles, had concentrated his scattered commands into one body in front of Washington, and thrown it forward along the line of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, in the direction of Gordonsville and Charlottesville. His force numbered near fifty thousand men. As the seizure of the points named would tap the Confederate communica-

* General Lee's own evidence leaves no doubt regarding the object of this operation: "In order to keep McClellan stationary, *or, if possible, to cause him to withdraw*, General D. H. Hill, commanding south of James River was directed to threaten his communications by seizing favorable positions below Westover, from which to attack the transports in the river." Lee's Report: Reports of the Operations of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 15.

tions with Southwestern Virginia, Lee, to meet Pope's advance, sent forward General Jackson, with his own and Ewell's divisions, towards Gordonsville. Jackson reached that place on the 19th of July; but from what he learned of Pope's strength he feared to risk offensive operations and called for re-enforcements.* Lee then increased his force by General A. P. Hill's division, which joined Jackson on the 2d of August. At that time Pope's army was along the turnpike from Culpepper to Sperryville, near the Blue Ridge—his left at Culpepper; while with the cavalry brigades of Buford and Bayard he observed the line of the Rapidan.

The 7th and 8th of August, Jackson crossed the Rapidan, and moved towards Culpepper. Pope met this by throwing forward Banks' corps to a position eight miles south of Culpepper, near Cedar Mountain, where a severe action ensued on the 9th between Banks' corps and the three divisions under Jackson. Banks, with much spirit, assumed the offensive, although doubly outnumbered, and attacked Jackson's right, under General Ewell. He then fell with much impetuosity upon his left, turned that flank, and poured a destructive fire into his rear, which caused the Confederate centre and nearly the whole line to give way in confusion. The assailants were, however, considerably broken in moving through the woods; and Jackson, receiving an accession of fresh troops, was able to check Banks, and finally force him back. The latter retired a short distance, but again took up position: so that when Jackson, under the impression of having gained a victory, attempted to follow up with the view of making Culpepper, he found himself checked. He remained in front of Banks until the night of the 11th, and then being apprehensive of being again attacked, he retreated to Gordonsville. The Confederate loss was about thirteen hundred; the Union loss about eighteen hundred.†

* Jackson's Report: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 3.

† It is proper to add here that the above too brief statement of Banks' attack of Jackson is based on the official report of Jackson himself, and is therefore not likely to be over-colored. "Whilst the Federal attack upon Early was

The encounter between Jackson and Banks raised in the mind of General Halleck the liveliest apprehensions touching the safety of Washington, and he sent General McClellan urgent orders to hasten the removal of his army. The sick, to the number of ten thousand, had already been shipped; then followed Burnside's corps (eleven thousand strong), which had been brought from North Carolina for the purpose of re-enforcing the Army of the Potomac, but was not allowed to debark, and was sent forward to Aquia Creek and thence to Fredericksburg. McClellan then put his whole army in motion, marched back from Harrison's Landing to Fortress Monroe, and thence, by successive shipments, forwarded it to Aquia Creek and Alexandria.

Not till this movement had been fully disclosed did General Lee form the resolve of striking northward. The column detached under Jackson to operate against Pope was no larger than that he had had in his previous campaign, and was inferior in numbers to Pope's force; and the menacing position held by General McClellan while at Harrison's Landing had retarded Lee from sending any additional troops to Jackson.* But now that he was being relieved from the pressure of McClellan's presence, there was nothing to prevent his moving

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in progress," says Jackson, "the main body of the Federal infantry moved down from the woods, through the corn and wheat fields, and fell with great vigor upon our extreme left; and by the force of superior numbers, bearing down all opposition, turned it and poured a destructive fire into its rear. Campbell's brigade fell back in disorder. The enemy pushing forward, and the left flank of A. G. Taliaferro's brigade being by these movements exposed to a flank fire, fell back, as did also the left of Early's line. General W. B. Taliaferro's division (Jackson's old division) becoming exposed, they were withdrawn."—Jackson's Report of Cedar Mountain: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 5. These are the words in which a general is apt to describe a serious defeat, and they justify a higher estimate of General Banks' conduct than his countrymen have yet accorded him.

* On this point General Lee says: "Jackson, on reaching Gordonsville, ascertained that the force under General Pope was superior to his own, *but the uncertainty that then surrounded the designs of General McClellan, rendered it inexpedient to re-enforce him from the army at Richmond.*"—Lee: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 15.

forward his entire army to destroy Pope, and he instantly took measures accordingly.* Thus it was that at the very moment McClellan was turning an unwilling back on Richmond and leaving the course open to his mighty rival, Lee was putting his columns in motion towards the Potomac. I shall accordingly leave for a while the army undergoing the laborious process of transfer by water, and trace that fierce outburst of battle that swept from the Blue Ridge to the foreground of Washington.

II.

POPE'S RETROGRADE MOVEMENT.

After the action of Cedar Mountain, Jackson retired to Gordonsville, fearing an attack from Pope's superior force.† The 15th of August he was joined at that place by the van of Lee's army, composed of Longstreet's division, two brigades under Hood, and Stuart's cavalry. Pope advanced his line, resting his left (Reno's corps of Burnside's army) on the Rapidan near Raccoon Ford; his centre (McDowell's corps) on Cedar Mountain, and his right (Sigel's corps) on Robertson's River, a branch of the Rapidan. Banks was posted at Culpepper.

On the arrival of Longstreet, Jackson advanced from Gordonsville to the Rapidan, waited till the 20th of August for Longstreet to come up, when they crossed at Raccoon and Somerville fords.

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* Nothing could be clearer than the evidence of General Lee on this point "The corps of General Burnside," says he, "had reached Fredericksburg, *and a part of General McClellan's army was believed to have left Westover* [Harrison's Landing] *to unite with Pope.* It therefore seemed that active operation on the James were no longer contemplated, *and that the most effectual way to relieve Richmond from any danger of attack from that quarter would be to reenforce General Jackson, and advance upon General Pope.*"—Lee: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 18. Veracious prophecy, showing that *insight* which is one of the highest marks of generalship!

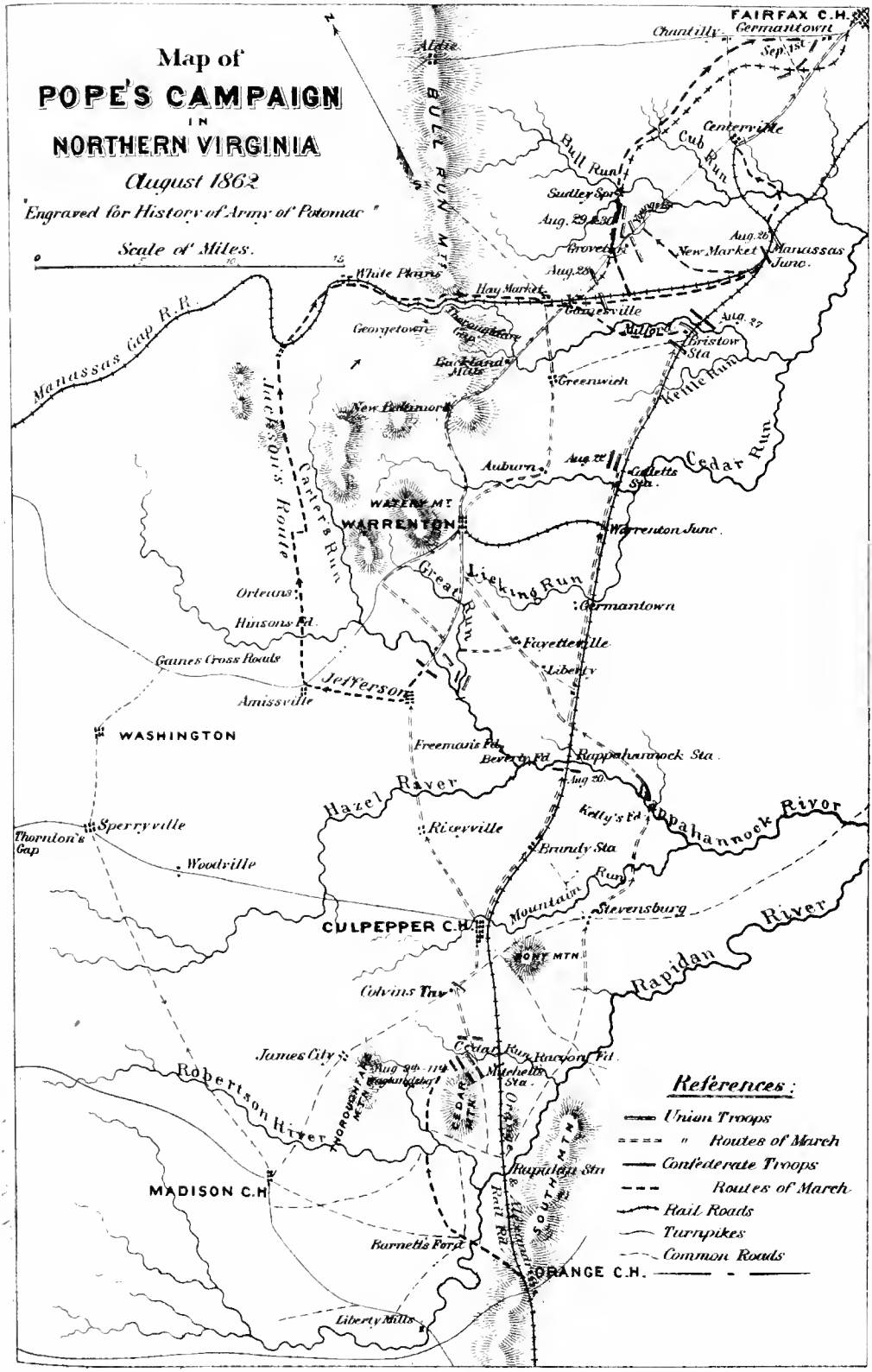
† Jackson's Report: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia vol. ii., p 7.

Learning the approach of this force, Pope on the 18th and 19th drew his army back behind the Rappahannock, his left at Kelly's Ford, and his right three miles above Rappahannock Station. This was a judicious measure on the part of General Pope; but it was not carrying out his own principles. In expounding before the war committee, a month before this time, what he proposed doing, he held the following language: "By lying off on their flanks, if they should have only forty thousand or fifty thousand men, I could whip them. If they should have seventy thousand or eighty thousand men, I would attack their flanks, and force them, in order to get rid of me, to follow me out into the mountains, which would be what you would want, I should suppose. They would not march on Washington, with me lying with such a force as that on their flanks."* Now, though the force which Lee had at this time did not exceed the smallest of these hypothetical numbers, and the force with which Pope proposed this operation had been increased by the addition of Reno's command, he did not attempt to carry it out, finding Lee, perhaps, less impressed than he should have been with the apparition of Pope "lying off on his flanks."

Pope having withdrawn behind the Rappahannock, Lee advanced his army to that stream, but finding that the Union commander covered the fords in force, he left Longstreet opposite these, to mask a turning movement by Jackson on Pope's right, by way of Warrenton.† Jackson accordingly ascended the Rappahannock by the south bank, and crossed the head of his column (Early's brigade) at Sulphur or Warrenton Springs on the 22d August. But that day a severe storm rendered the river impassable, and Early was compelled to recross the Rappahannock, which he did the following night on an improvised bridge. While these manœuvres were under way, Stuart with fifteen hundred horsemen, made an expedition to cut the railroad communica-

* Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 278.

† Lee's Report: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 19.


Map of
POPE'S CAMPAIGN
IN
NORTHERN VIRGINIA
August 1862
"Engraved for History of Army of Potomac"
Scale of Miles.
0
5
10
15
FAIRFAX C.H.
Chantilly
Germantown
Sep. 1st
Centerville
Cub Run
Bull Run
Sudley Spr.
Aug. 29 & 30
Aug. 26
New Market
Manassas Junc.
Aug. 28
White Plains
Hay Market
Gainesville
Aug. 27
Bristow Sta
Georgetown
Thoroughfare Gap
Buckland Mills
Greenwich
Kettle Run
Manassas Gap R.R.
New Baltimore
Auburn
Aug. 22
Calletts Sta.
Cedar Run
Jackson's Route
Carter's Run
WATERY MT.
WARRENTON
Warrenton Junc.
Great Run
Licking Run
Germantown
Orleans
Hinsons Fd.
Fayetteville
Liberty
Gaines Cross Roads
Jefferson
Amissville
WASHINGTON
Freeman's Fd.
Beverly Fd.
Rappahannock Sta.
Aug. 20
Hazel River
Rappahannock River
Kelly's Fd.
Sperryville
Thornton's Gap
Rixeyville
Brandy Sta.
Woodville
Mountain Run
Stevensburg
CULPEPPER C.H.
BONY MTN.
Rapidan River
Colvins Tav.
James City
Cedar Run
Racoon Fd.
Mitchells Sta.
Robertson River
THOROUGHFARE MTN.
CEDAR MTN.
Orange & Alexandria Rail Rd.
SOUTH MTN.
Rapidan Sta.
MADISON C.H.
Barnetts Ford
ORANGE C.H.
Liberty Mills
References:
Union Troops
" Routes of March
Confederate Troops
Routes of March
Rail Roads
Turnpikes
Common Roads

tions in rear of Pope's army. Stuart succeeded in reaching Catlett's Station in the dead of an exceedingly dark night, fired the camp and captured three hundred prisoners, with Pope's official papers and his baggage. He failed, however, to burn the railroad-bridge, and does not seem to have been aware that Pope's entire army train was parked there.*

III.

JACKSON'S FLANK MARCH.

The movement of Jackson up the south bank of the Rappahannock to turn Pope's right was met by a corresponding movement of Pope up the Rappahannock on the north bank, so that on the 24th, Sigel and Banks and Reno occupied Sulphur Springs, and Jackson's main body lay on the opposite side of the stream; but on the 25th, Jackson, striking out still further to his left by Amissville, crossed the upper Rappahannock—here called the Hedgeman River—at Henson's Mill, turned Pope's right, and moving by Orleans, bivouacked at Salem, after a forced march of thirty-five miles. Next day (26th) Jackson continued the advance. Diverging eastward at Salem, he crossed the Bull Run Mountain through Thoroughfare Gap, and passing Gainesville, he, at sunset, reached Bristoe Station on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. This he proceeded to destroy, while he at the same time dispatched Stuart with his cavalry and a force of infantry to Manassas Junction, seven miles nearer Washington. Here Stuart took several hundred prisoners, eight guns, and immense supplies of commissary and quartermaster's stores. Jackson's instructions from his chief had

* This enterprise to the rear of his army must have given Pope an occasion to realize the truth of his own maxim, that "*disaster and shame lurk in the rear.*"

been to "throw his command between Washington City and the army of General Pope and to break up his railroad communications with the Federal capital." * That energetic lieutenant had carried them out to the letter. It is now time to look to Pope's movements.

While Jackson's column was executing this flank movement to the rear of Pope, Lee retained Longstreet's command in his front to divert his attention, and learning that Pope was about to receive re-enforcements from McClellan, he ordered forward the remainder of his army from Richmond.† Nevertheless, the stealthy march of Jackson did not pass unnoted by the Union commander, who received very precise information respecting his movement northward, though he was unable to divine its aim.‡ Bewildered by his antagonist's manœuvres, Pope made a series of ridiculous tentatives; but finally, on the 26th, he determined to fall back from the Rappahannock nearer to Washington. During the day he learned that Jackson was already on his rear at Manassas, and had cut his railway communications with Washington!

It must be admitted the situation was a difficult one, but it was one that afforded a vigorous commander opportunity for a decisive blow. Lee had in fact committed an act of unwonted rashness, and voluntarily placed himself in such a position that when Jackson had reached Bristoe Station and Manassas, Longstreet, with the van of the main column, moving by the same route taken by that officer, was still distant two marches. Pope was therefore left free to place himself between the two, and beat them in detail. Such a piece of

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* Jackson s Report: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 92.

† This force consisted of D. H. Hill's and McLaws' divisions, two brigades under General Walker, and Hampton's cavalry brigade.

‡ The information was derived from Colonel J. S. Clark, of the staff of General Banks. That officer remained all day in a perilous position within sight of Jackson's moving column, and counted its force, which he found to be thirty-six regiments of infantry, with the proper proportion of batteries and a considerable cavalry force.

temerity is only justifiable when a general has a great and well-grounded contempt for his adversary.

Pope was at this time in a condition to undertake a bold stroke; for he had already been re-enforced by a considerable body of the Army of the Potomac arriving from the Peninsula. Reynolds' division of Pennsylvania Reserves had joined him at Rappahannock Station on the 23d; the corps of Porter and Heintzelman at Warrenton Junction, on the 26th and 27th; and the remainder of the Army of the Potomac (corps of Sumner and Franklin) was *en route* from Alexandria.

The measures taken by Pope to meet the new turn of affairs showed an appreciation of the line of action suited to the circumstances; but he was incapable of carrying it out, for he had completely lost his head. The obvious move was to throw forward his left so as to seize the road by which Longstreet would advance to join Jackson. With this view, he, on the morning of the 27th, directed General McDowell, with his own and Sigel's corps and the division of Reynolds, upon Gainesville,—a movement that would plant that powerful force of forty thousand men on the road by which Lee's main column, moving through Thoroughfare Gap, must advance to join Jackson. This force was to be supported by Reno's corps and Kearney's division of Heintzelman's corps, which were directed on Greenwich, while he moved with Hooker's division along the Orange and Alexandria Railroad towards Manassas Junction. Porter's corps (when relieved at Warrenton Junction by Banks, who was to remain at that point, covering the trains and repairing the railroad) was also directed upon Gainesville. These dispositions were not only correct—they were brilliant. The lame and impotent sequel is now to be seen.

The main or interposing column under McDowell was to reach its assigned position at Gainesville and Greenwich that night, the 27th. This was successfully accomplished. At the same time, Pope, with Hooker's command, moved along the railroad to come up with Jackson at Bristoe Station. Near that place Hooker, late in the afternoon, came up with a Con-

federate force under Ewell, whom Jackson had that morning left there, while he, with his other divisions, pushed forward to Manassas Junction. A brisk engagement ensued, but Ewell, finding himself unable to maintain his ground, withdrew across Broad Run, under orders from Jackson, and joined the latter at Manassas Junction. Thinking that the engagement might be renewed in the morning at Bristoe Station, Pope instructed General Porter to move up from Warrenton Junction at one A. M., and be at Bristoe by dawn of the 28th. Porter was not able to start till three o'clock, owing to the darkness of the night and the obstruction of the road, and did not reach Bristoe till between eight and nine o'clock. As it happened, however, there was no immediate occasion for him, as Ewell had, during the night, moved forward to rejoin Jackson at Manassas Junction.

And now, as it appeared on the morning of the 28th, there was no escape for Jackson; and Pope boldly proclaimed it.* Jackson was at Manassas Junction; a powerful force was coming up in his rear. McDowell, at Gainesville, with forty thousand men, interposed between him and Lee, the remainder of whose force was still west of the Bull Run Mountains, distant a full day's march. But fortune and the errors of his adversary favored Jackson; and at the very time he seemed to be nearing the crisis of his fate, events were occurring that were destined to extricate him from his seemingly perilous position.

When, on the night of the 27th, Pope learnt that Jackson was in the vicinity of Manassas, he directed McDowell, with all his force, to take up the march early on the morning of the 28th, and move eastward from Gainesville and Greenwich upon Manassas Junction, following the line of the Manassas Gap Railroad; while he ordered Hooker and Kearney and Porter to advance northward from Bristoe Station upon the same place. From Gainesville to Manassas Junction the dis-

* "If you will march promptly and rapidly at the earliest dawn upon Manassas Junction, we shall bag the whole crowd."—Pope's order of 27th to General McDowell: Report, p. 41

tance is fifteen miles; from Bristoe Station, it is eight miles; and from Manassas Junction west to Thoroughfare Gap, where Lee must debouch through the Bull Run Mountains to unite with Jackson, is twenty miles.

This move was a great error. Pope's left (McDowell's column) was his strategic flank, and should have been thrown forward, rather then retired; for in withdrawing from the line of the Warrenton turnpike to Manassas Junction, he permitted Jackson, by a move from Manassas Junction to the north of the turnpike, to do precisely what he should at all hazards have been prevented from doing—namely, to put himself in the way of a junction with the main body of Lee's army. Could Jackson, indeed, have been induced to remain at Manassas Junction for the convenience of Pope, that general's strategy would have worked to a charm; but Jackson was fully alive to the peril of his position, and while Pope thought he was in the act of "bagging" Jackson, Jackson was giving Pope the slip. The details are as follows: During the night of the 27th and morning of the 28th Jackson moved his force from Manassas, by the Sudley Springs road, across to the Warrenton turnpike; crossing which, he gained the high timber-land north and west of Groveton, in the vicinity of the battle-field of the 21st July, 1861. When, therefore, Pope, with the divisions of Hooker and Kearney and Reno, reached Manassas Junction, about noon of the 28th, he found that Jackson had already gone! Pope then tried to correct his error by calling back McDowell's column from its march towards Manassas Junction and directing it on Centreville, to which point he also ordered forward Hooker, Kearney, and Reno, and afterwards Porter. But much time had been lost; the columns on the march towards Manassas had been forced to take other roads than those indicated for them; and it was late in the afternoon when McDowell, with one division of his whole command (King's), regained the Warrenton turnpike and headed towards Centreville. Now Jackson, as already seen, had taken position on the north side of the turnpike, near Groveton; so that on the approach of King's column, it

unwittingly presented a flank to Jackson, who assailed it furiously. Jackson attacked with two divisions (the Stonewall division, then under General Taliaferro, and Ewell's division), while the fight was sustained on the Union side by King's division alone. The behavior of his troops was exceedingly creditable, and they maintained their ground with what Jackson styles "obstinate determination." The loss on both sides was severe, and on the part of the Confederates included Generals Ewell and Taliaferro, both of whom were severely wounded —the former losing a leg. Unfortunately, during the night, King withdrew his command to Manassas, leaving the Warrenton turnpike available for Jackson's withdrawal or Longstreet's advance. That same night, too, Gen. Ricketts (whom McDowell had detached with his division to dispute the passage of Thoroughfare Gap with Longstreet) also withdrew to Manassas. Thus affairs went from bad to worse.

IV

THE SECOND BATTLE OF MANASSAS.

By the morning of the 29th, General Pope had learnt the real position of the adversary who had hitherto so adroitly eluded him; but his troops had become so scattered by his contradictory orders, that it could hardly be said he had an army at all. Sigel and Reynolds had, however, turned up near Groveton; and Pope directed them to develop the position of the enemy,* while he sought to get his remaining forces in hand. Reno's corps, and Heintzelman with his two divisions under Hooker and Kearney, were ordered to countermarch from Centreville; while Porter, with his corps and King's division of McDowell's command, was directed to

* General Pope, in his official report (p. 20), states that the attack by Sigel was for the purpose of "bringing Jackson to a stand, *if it were possible to do so*," thus intimating that Jackson was moving off. There does not seem to have been any occasion for this solicitude.

advance on Gainesville, a position it had been more easy to abandon the day before than to regain now.

Jackson continued to hold his vantage-ground upon the highlands northwest of Groveton ; and as he now commanded the Warrenton road, by which Lee was moving to join him, and had intelligence that his chief was close at hand, he had ceased to fear the result of an encounter with Pope. Jackson disposed his troops along the cut of an unfinished railroad,* with his right resting on the Warrenton turnpike, and his left near Sudley Mill. The mass of his troops were sheltered in dense woods behind the railroad cut and embankment, which formed a ready-made parapet.

General Sigel, as ordered, attacked in the morning, pushing forward his line under a warm fire, under which he suffered severely ; and, towards noon, he was joined by Reno's command and the divisions of Hooker and Kearney. Meanwhile, Porter, in the morning, moved forward from Manassas Junction to turn Jackson's right by an advance on Gainesville.

Had the position of the Confederates been as Pope imagined, the latter move should have been decisive, and must have seriously jeopardized Jackson's safety. But, while Porter's column was yet in motion, and before it could reach Jackson's flank, the van of Lee's main body began to reach the field from Thoroughfare Gap. In fact, by ten in the morning, Longstreet had come up, and, taking position on Jackson's right, drew an extension of the Confederate line across the Warrenton turnpike and the Manassas Gap Railroad, thus covering all the lines of approach by which the column of Porter might advance towards Gainesville. Upon

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* " My troops on this day were distributed along and in the vicinity of the cut of an unfinished railroad (intended as a part of the track to connect the Manassas road directly with Alexandria), stretching from the Warrenton turnpike in the direction of Sudley Mill. It was mainly along the unfinished excavation of this unfinished road that my line of battle was formed on the 29th: Jackson's division, under Brigadier-General Starke, on the right ; Ewell's division, under Brigadier-General Lawton, in the centre ; and Hill's division on the left "—Jackson's Report: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 95.

finding himself thus estopped, Porter was proceeding to form his line when he was overtaken by General McDowell, under whose orders the former then came. The precise tenor of the instructions which, at this moment, McDowell gave Porter is a point in dispute,—McDowell asserting that he ordered Porter to move against the enemy, and Porter claiming that McDowell directed him to remain where he was. However this may be, McDowell took King's division, which belonged to his own corps, from under Porter, and, uniting it with Rickett's division (also of McDowell's corps), headed his column northward to the battle-field near Groveton, where he arrived late in the afternoon. Porter held his command for the rest of the day in the position taken up,—Morell's division being deployed and in contact with the enemy; the other divisions massed.

Thus it was that, by contradictory orders and the useless marches and counter-marches they involved, Pope's opportunity was thrown away, and instead of fighting Jackson's corps alone, it was the entire army of Lee with which he had to deal,—this, too, with his forces very much out of position, and he himself ignorant both of his own situation and that of the enemy When, towards noon, Pope, coming from Centreville, reached the field near Groveton, he found the situation as follows: Heintzelman's two divisions, under Hooker and Kearney, on the right, in front and west of the Sudley Springs road; Reno and Sigel holding the centre,—Sigel's line being extended a short distance south of the Warrenton turnpike; Reynolds with his division on the left. But the commander was ignorant of the whereabouts of both Porter and McDowell, and he knew not that Longstreet had joined Jackson! The troops had been considerably cut up by the brisk skirmishing that had been kept up all the morning. An artillery duel had also been waged all the forenoon between the opposing lines; but it was at long range and of no effect.

The position of the troops in front of Jackson's intrenched line was one that promised very little success for a direct attack, and especially for a partial attack. Nevertheless, at

three o'clock, Pope ordered Hooker to assault. The attempt was so unpromising that that officer remonstrated against it; but the order being imperative, he made a very determined attack with his division. The action was especially brilliant on the part of Grover's brigade, which, advancing with the bayonet, succeeded in penetrating between the two extreme left brigades of Jackson's line,* and got possession of the railroad embankment which, by a savage hand-to-hand fight, it held for some time, till driven back by the arrival of reenforcements to the Confederate left.† Too late for united action, Kearney was sent to Hooker's assistance, and he also suffered repulse.

Meanwhile, Pope had learnt the position of Porter's command, and, at half-past four in the afternoon, sent orders to that officer to assail the enemy's right flank and rear,—Pope erroneously believing the right flank of Jackson, near Groveton, to be the right of the Confederate line. Towards six, when he thought Porter should be coming into action, he directed Heintzelman and Reno to assault the enemy's left. The attack was made with vigor, especially by Kearney, who struck Jackson's left under Hill, at a moment when the Confederates had almost exhausted their ammunition.‡ Doubling up Hill's flank on his centre, Kearney seized the railroad embankment and that part of the field of battle. "This," as Kearney says, "presaged a victory for us all. Still," he goes on to observe, "our force was too light. The enemy brought up rapidly heavy reserves, so that our further progress was impeded."§ In fact, Kearney was compelled to fall back

* These were the brigades of Gregg and Thomas.—Jackson: Report, p. 95.

† Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 252.

‡ "The enemy prepared for a last and determined attempt. Their serried masses, overwhelming superiority of numbers [absurd exaggeration common to both sides], and bold bearing [it was Kearney], made the chance of victory to tremble in the balance; my own division, exhausted by seven hours unremitted fighting, had hardly one round per man remaining, and was weakened in all things save its unconquerable spirit."—Report of General A. P. Hill: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 125.

§ Kearney's Report: Report of General Pope, p. 79.

altogether from the railroad, and the "presage of victory" was turned to naught.*

Turning now to the left, where Porter was to have assailed the Confederate right, it appears that the order which Pope sent at half-past four, did not reach Porter till about dusk. He then made dispositions for attack, but it was too late. It is, however, more than doubtful that even had the order been received in time, any thing but repulse would have resulted from its execution. Porter was reduced to the necessity of making a direct attack in front; for there was no opportunity of making a turning movement, seeing that, contrary to Pope's opinion, he had then, and had had since noon, Longstreet's entire corps before him.† So as firing now died away in the

* The Confederate re-enforcements, of which Kearney speaks, consisted of the brigades of Early and Lawton. (See Report of General A. P Hill: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 125.) General Early says, in his report: "My brigade and the Eighth Louisiana advanced upon the enemy through a field, and drove him from the woods and out of the railroad-cut, crossing the latter and following in pursuit several hundred yards beyond."—Ibid., p. 184.

† As the view above taken of the action of that part of the "Second Bull Run," fought on the 29th of August, differs in some important particulars from previous accounts, and especially from the official report of General Pope, I shall here substantiate by Confederate official records the truth of such points of difference as are of moment. The question foremost in interest has relation to the *time* at which Longstreet's corps joined Jackson. General Pope repeatedly states that this did not take place till "about sunset" (see Pope's Official Report, p. 21); and it is on this ground that he and the court-martial that tried General Porter based their condemnation of that officer for not turning Jackson's right. Says Pope: "I believe—in fact, I am positive—that at five o'clock in the afternoon of the 29th, General Porter had in his front no considerable body of the enemy. I believed then, as I am very sure now, that it was easily practicable for him to have turned the right flank of Jackson, and to have fallen upon his rear; that if he had done so, we should have gained a decisive victory over the army under Jackson *before he could have been joined by any of the forces of Longstreet*." (Pope's Report, p. 22.) Now this assertion is traversed by the positive evidence of the official reports of several of the generals under Longstreet's command, who show conclusively that Longstreet joined Jackson as early as *noon*. Says Longstreet himself: "*Early on the 29th* the columns were united, and the advance, to join General Jackson, was resumed. The noise of battle was heard before we reached Gainesville. The

darkling woods on the right, a pause was put for the day to the chaos and confusion of this mismanaged battle, in which many thousand men had fallen on the Union side.

It would have been judicious for General Pope, in the then condition of his army, to have that night withdrawn across Bull Run and taken position at Centreville, or even within the fortifications of Washington. By doing so he would have united with the corps of Franklin and Sumner, then between

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march was quickened to the extent of our capacity. The excitement of battle seemed to give new life and strength to our jaded men, and the head of my column *soon reached a position in rear of the enemy's left flank.*" (Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 8.) See also Hood. (Ibid., p. 209.) But General D. R. Jones, who commanded the *rear* division of Longstreet's corps is still more explicit. "Early on the morning of the 29th, I took up the march in the direction of the old battle-ground of Manasses, whence heavy firing was heard. *Arriving on the ground about noon,* my command was stationed on the extreme right of our line," etc. (Ibid., p. 217.) This would appear to settle the time of arrival of Longstreet; and I shall now show that before Porter came up from Manassas, Longstreet had taken up such a position as to bar his advance towards Gainesville. On this head Longstreet's own testimony will suffice, and it is as complete as could be desired. After giving his dispositions for his connection with Jackson's right, he states that "Hood's division was deployed *on the right and left of the Warrenton turnpike,* at right angles with it. General D. R. Jones' division was placed *upon the Manassas Gap Railroad,* to the right, and in echelon with regard to the three last brigades." (Ibid., pp. 81, 82.) Now it is quite obvious that this disposition covered Porter's whole front, and that it barred his approach to Gainesville. Any attack by Porter would therefore necessarily be made in front. When he received Pope's order to attack the enemy's right and turn his rear, Morell's division was already deployed in front of Longstreet, and it was near dark when the order came to hand. Probably there is no military man who will now say that the operation indicated by Pope was at that time possible. General Porter many months subsequent to these events, and after having in the meanwhile had command of the forces for the defence of the capital, and been at the head of his corps at the battle of Antietam, was arraigned before a court-martial at Washington, and dismissed the service of the United States, for alleged disobedience to the above orders of Pope. I do not constitute myself the champion of General Porter, or of any other officer; but having become possessed of the Confederate official reports, and having been struck with the new light thrown on these events by the unconscious testimony given above by the Confederate generals, I should have violated the first duty of a historian had I suppressed these facts.

Washington and Centreville, whereas at Manassas Lee was sure to receive fresh accessions of force, while Pope could hope for none. The army was much cut up; thousands had straggled from their commands; the troops had had little to eat for two days previously; the artillery and cavalry horses had been in harness and saddled continually for ten days.

With untimely obstinacy, Pope determined to remain and again try the issue of battle. To utilize Porter's corps, he drew it over from the isolated position it had held the previous day to the Warrenton road, on which he pivoted, disposing his line in the form of a V reversed—Reynolds' command forming the left leg, and Porter, Sigel, and Reno the right, with Heintzelman's two divisions holding the extreme right. Lee retained the same relative position he had held the day before—Longstreet on the right, and Jackson on the left; but he drew back his left considerably, abandoning during the night some of the ground he had held on that flank.

Now, by one of those curious conjunctures which sometimes occur in battle, it so was that the opposing commanders had that day formed each the same resolution: Pope had determined to attack Lee's left flank, and Lee had determined to attack Pope's left flank. And thus it came about that when Heintzelman pushed forward to feel the enemy's left, the refusal of that flank by Lee, and his withdrawal of troops to his right for the purpose of making his contemplated attack on Pope's left, gave the impression that the Confederates were retreating up the Warrenton turnpike towards Gainesville. This impression was further strengthened by the report of a wounded Confederate soldier who fell into the hands of the Union pickets, and reported that he had heard his comrades say that "Jackson was retiring to unite with Longstreet." Now this statement was quite correct in the sense in which Lee's manœuvres have already been presented—that is, as a tactical change of Jackson's position on the left to re-enforce Longstreet on the right. But Pope, who had not that day been to the front, accepted the story as indicating a real falling back, and telegraphed to Washington that the enemy was

"retreating to the mountains,"—a dispatch which, flashed throughout the land, gave the people a few hours, at least, of unmixed pleasure.

To take advantage of the supposed "retreat" of Lee, Pope ordered McDowell with three corps—Porter's in the advance—to follow up rapidly on the Warrenton turnpike, and "press the enemy vigorously during the whole day." But no sooner were the troops put in motion to make this pursuit of a supposed flying foe, than the Confederates, hitherto concealed in the forest in front of Porter, uncovered themselves, and opened a heavy fire from their numerous artillery;* and while King's division was being formed on Porter's right in order to press an attack, clouds of dust on the extreme left showed that the enemy was moving to turn the Union line in that direction; and that, instead of retiring, he was in the full tide of an offensive movement. To meet this manœuvre, General McDowell detached Reynolds' command from the left of Porter's force north of the Warrenton turnpike, and directed it on a position south of that road to check this menace. The Warrenton turnpike, which intersects the Manassas battle-field, runs westward up the valley of the little rivulet of Young's Branch. From the stream the ground rises on both sides, in some places quite into hills. The Sudley Springs road, on crossing the stream at right angles, passes directly over one of these hills, just south of the Warrenton turnpike; and this hill has on it a detached road with fields stretching back away from it some hundreds of yards to the forest. This is the hill whereon what is known as the "Henry House" stood. To the west of it is another hill—the Bald Hill, so called—which is in fact a rise lying between the roads, and making about the same angle

* "As soon as Butterfield's brigade advanced up the hill, there was great commotion among the rebel forces, and the whole side of the hill and edges of the woods swarmed with men before unseen. The effect was not unlike flushing a covey of quail. The enemy fell back to the line of the railroad, and took shelter in the cut and behind the embankment."—Warren: Report of the Second Battle of Manassas.

with each, and running back to the forest. Between the two hills is a brook, a tributary of Young's Branch. Upon the latter hill General McDowell directed Reynolds' division and a portion of Rickett's command, so as to check the flank manœuvre that menaced seizure of the Warrenton turnpike, which was the line of retreat of the whole army

The occupation of this position was judicious on the part of General McDowell; but the detachment of Reynolds from Porter's left for that purpose had an unfortunate result;* for it exposed the key-point of Porter's line. Colonel G. K. Warren, who then commanded one of Porter's brigades, seeing the imminence of the danger, at once, and without waiting for orders, moved forward with his small but brave brigade of about a thousand men,† and occupied the important position abandoned by Reynolds; Porter then, as well to sustain Warren, as to fulfil his orders of *pursuit*, his column of attack being formed, made a vigorous assault on the Confederate position; but beyond driving back the advanced line so as to develop the Confederate array as formed behind the railroad embankment, he was able to accomplish nothing. Line after line was swept away by the enemy's artillery and infantry fire, and so destructive was its effect that Porter's troops finally were compelled to withdraw. Porter's attack had been directed against Jackson; but Longstreet, on Jackson's right, found a commanding point of ground, whence he could rake the assaulting columns with an enfilading fire of artillery. "From an eminence near by," says that officer, "one portion of the enemy's masses, attacking General Jackson, were immediately within my view, and in easy range of batteries in that position. It gave me an advantage I had not expected to have, and I made haste to use it. Two batteries were ordered for the purpose, and one placed in position immediately and opened. Just as this fire began, I received a message from

* Sigel's corps should have been taken in place of Reynolds' division, or anybody else rather than Reynolds.

† Warren's command consisted of the Fifth and Tenth New York Volunteers.

the commanding general, informing me of General Jackson's condition and his wants. As it was evident that the attack against General Jackson could not be continued ten minutes under the fire of these batteries, I made no movement with my troops. Before the second battery could be placed in position the enemy began to retire, and in less than ten minutes the ranks were broken, and that portion of his army put to flight."* Warren occupying the important point he had seized, held on stoutly and against a fearful loss till all the rest of Porter's troops had been retired, and only withdrew when the enemy had advanced so close as to fire in the very faces of his men.

Such was the situation of affairs at five o'clock in the afternoon: Porter's troops, fearfully cut up in repeated assaults of a position which it was hopeless to attempt to carry, were retiring from the field. Jackson immediately took up the pursuit, and was joined by a general advance of the whole Confederate line—Longstreet extending his right so as, if possible, to cut off the retreat of the Union forces. By an impetuous rush, Longstreet carried the "Bald Hill," held by Reynolds and Ricketts; and it then became doubtful whether even the "Henry House Hill" could be maintained so as to cover the retreat of the army over Bull Run, for Longstreet had thrown around his right so as to menace that position. This, however, was happily provided for by the firmness of some battalions of Regulars, which held the ground until relieved by the brigades of Meade and Seymour and other troops, that maintained the position and permitted the withdrawal of the army. Under cover of the darkness the wearied troops retired across Bull Run, by the stone bridge, and took position on the heights of Centreville. Owing to the obscurity of the night, and the uncertainty of the fords of Bull Run, Lee attempted no pursuit.†

* Longstreet: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 83.

† "The obscurity of the night, and the uncertainty of the fords of Bull Run, rendered it necessary to suspend operations until morning." Lee's Report: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 25.

V

EXIT POPE.

At Centreville, Pope united with the corps of Franklin and Sumner, and he remained there during the whole of the 31st. But Lee had not yet given up the pursuit. Leaving Longstreet on the battle-field, he sent Jackson by a detour on Pope's right, to strike the Little River turnpike, and by that route to Fairfax Courthouse, to intercept, if possible, Pope's retreat to Washington. Jackson's march was much retarded by a heavy storm that commenced the day before and still continued. Pope, meantime, fell back to positions covering Fairfax Courthouse and Germantown; and on the evening of the 1st of September, Jackson struck his right posted at Ox Hill, near Germantown. He immediately engaged the Union force with Hill's and Ewell's divisions in the midst of a cold and drenching rain. The attack fell upon Reno, Hooker, a part of McDowell, and Kearney. A firm front was maintained till Stevens' division of Reno's corps, owing to the exhaustion of its ammunition, and the death of its general, was forced back in disorder. To repair this break, Kearney, with the promptitude that marked him, sent forward Birney's brigade of his own division; and presently, all aglow with zeal, brought up a battery which he placed in position. But there still remained a gap on Birney's right, caused by the retirement of Stevens' division. This Birney pointed out to Kearney, and that gallant soldier, dashing forward to reconnoitre the ground, unwittingly rode into the enemy's lines and was killed. In his death, the army lost the living ideal of a soldier—a *preux chevalier*, in whom there were mixed the qualities of chivalry and gallantry as strong as ever beat beneath the mailed coat of an olden knight. Like Desaix, whom Napoleon characterized as "the man most worthy to

be his lieutenant," Kearney died opposing a heroic breast to disaster.

On the following day, September 2d, the army was, by order of General Halleck, drawn back within the lines of Washington, and Lee, abandoning direct pursuit, began to turn his eyes towards the north of the Potomac.

Within the fortifications of Washington the army now rested from the labors, fatigues, and privations of this trying campaign, in which, from the Rapidan to the front of the capital, it had fought and retreated, and retreated and fought. It had passed through an experience calculated to dislocate the structure of most armies; and if it reached the lines of Washington in any military order whatsoever, it was because the individual patriotism of the rank and file supplied a bond of cohesion when the bond of military discipline failed. Of the losses in killed and wounded during this campaign, no official record is found; but the Confederate commander claims the capture of nine thousand prisoners, thirty pieces of artillery, and upwards of twenty thousand stands of arms in the engagement on the plains of Manassas alone. Untold thousands had straggled from their commands during the retreat.

As for Pope, it is hardly possible to feel for him less than pity, in spite of the bombastic pretensions with which he set out. The record already given does not justify the assertion that he was not obeyed by his subordinates; but it cannot be denied that the estimate of his character held by the officers under his command was not of a kind to elicit that hearty and zealous co-operation needed for the effective conduct of great military operations. He had the misfortune to be of all men the most *disbelieved*. General Pope took the first opportunity on his return to Washington to vacate the command; the Army of Virginia passed out of existence, and its corps, were united with the Army of the Potomac.

VI.

THE MARYLAND CAMPAIGN.

SEPTEMBER—OCTOBER, 1862.

I.

MANŒUVRES PREVIOUS TO ANTIETAM.

WHEN Lee put his columns in motion from Richmond, it was with no intent of entering upon a campaign of invasion across the great river that formed the dividing line between the warring powers. But who can foretell the results that may spring from the simplest act in that complex interplay of cause and effect we name war? A secondary operation, having in view merely to hold Pope in check, had effected not only its primal aim, but the infinitely more important result of dislodging the Army of the Potomac from the Peninsula. Thus relieved of all care touching Richmond, Lee was free to assume a real offensive for the purpose not merely of checking but of crushing Pope. The success of the campaign had been remarkable. From the front of Richmond the theatre of operations had been transferred to the front of Washington; the Union armies had been reduced to a humiliating defensive, and the rich harvests of the Shenandoah Valley and Northern Virginia were the prize of the victors. To crown and consolidate these conquests, Lee now determined to cross the frontier into Maryland.

The prospective advantages of such a transfer of the theatre of war to the north of the Potomac seemed strongly to invite it; for, in addition to the telling blows Lee might

hope to inflict in the demoralized condition of the Union army, and the prestige that the enterprise would lend the Confederate cause abroad, it was judged that the presence of the hostile force would detain McClellan on the frontier long enough to render an invasion of Virginia during the approaching winter difficult, if not impracticable.*

Yet, if the enterprise had promised only such military gain, it is doubtful whether the Richmond government would have undertaken a project involving the renunciation of the proved advantages of their proper defensive; but it seemed, in addition, to hold out certain ulterior inducements, which were none the less alluring for being somewhat vague. The theory of the invasion assumed that the presence of the Confederate army in Maryland would induce an immediate rising among the citizens of that State for what General Lee calls "the recovery of their liberties." If it did not prompt an armed insurrection, it was, at least, expected that the people of Maryland would assume such an attitude as would seriously embarrass the Government and necessitate the retention of a great part of its military force for the purpose of preventing anticipated risings. By this means it was believed that it would be difficult for the Union authorities to apply a concentrated effort to the expulsion of the invading force.†

Without the prospect of some such incidental and ulterior advantages as these, the enterprise would hardly have been undertaken; for, not only was it perilous in itself, but the Confederate army was not properly equipped for invasion: it lacked much of the material of war and was feeble in transportation, while the troops were so wretchedly clothed and

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* Lee: Report of the Maryland Campaign, in Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 27.

† General Lee's statement on this head is somewhat vague; but it can hardly mean any thing else than what is indicated above: "The condition of Maryland encouraged the belief that the presence of our army, however inferior to that of the enemy, *would induce the Washington Government to retain all its available force to provide against contingencies which its course towards the people of that State gave it reason to apprehend.*"—Ibid.

shod that little else could be claimed for them than what Tilly boasted of his followers—that they were an army of "ragged soldiers and bright muskets."*

Plausible though this anticipation of a secessionist uprising in Maryland seemed, it rested on a false basis and was not more emphatically belied by experience than it was condemned by sound reasoning before the fact. Nevertheless, misled by this illusion, Lee turned the heads of his columns away from the direction of Washington, which he never seems to have dreamed of assailing directly, and put them in motion towards Leesburg. Between the 4th and 7th of September the whole Confederate army crossed the Potomac by the fords near that place, and encamped in the vicinity of Frederick, where the standard of revolt was formally raised, and the people of Maryland invited by proclamation of General Lee to join the Confederate force. But it soon became manifest that the expectation of practical assistance from the Marylanders was destined to grievous disappointment; and the ragged and shoeless soldiers who entered the State chanting the song in which Maryland was made passionately to invoke Southern aid against Northern despotism found, instead of the rapturous reception they had anticipated, cold indifference or ill-concealed hostility. Of the citizens of Maryland a large number (and notably the population of the western counties) were really loyal, a considerable number indifferent, and a smaller number bitterly secessionist. But to permit the secessionists to move at all, it was necessary that Lee should first of all demonstrate his ability to remain in the State by overthrowing the powerful Union force that was moving to meet him; while the lukewarm, whom the romance of the invasion might have allured, were repelled by the wretchedness, the rags, and the shocking filth of the "army of liberation."

* "Thousands of the troops," says Lee, "were destitute of shoes."—Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 27. "Never," says General Jones, who commanded Jackson's old "Stonewall" division, "had the army been so dirty, ragged, and ill provided for, as on this march."—Ibid., vol. ii., p. 221.

In the dark hour when the shattered battalions that survived Pope's campaign returned to Washington, General McClellan, at the request of the President, resumed command of the Army of the Potomac, with the addition thereto of Burnside's command and the corps composing the late Army of Virginia. Whatever may have been the estimate of McClellan's military capacity at this time held by the President, or General Halleck, or Mr. Secretary Stanton, or the Committee on the Conduct of the War, there appears to have been no one to gainsay the propriety of the appointment or dispute the magic of his name with the soldiers he had led. McClellan's reappearance at the head of affairs had the most beneficial effect on the army, whose *morale* immediately underwent an astonishing change. The heterogeneous mass made up of the aggregation of the remnants of the two armies, and the garrison of Washington, was reorganized into a compact body—a work that had mostly to be done while the army was on the march;* and as soon as it became known that Lee had crossed the Potomac, McClellan moved towards Frederick to meet him. The advance was made by five parallel roads, and the columns were so disposed as to cover both Washington and Baltimore; for the left flank rested on the Potomac, and the right on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The right wing consisted of the First and Ninth corps, under General Burnside; the centre, of the Second and Twelfth corps, under General Sumner; and the left wing, of the Sixth Corps, under General Franklin.†

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* "Like the rest of the army, the artillery may be said to have been organized on the march and in the intervals of conflict."—Hunt: Report of Artillery Operations of the Maryland Campaign.

† The First Corps (McDowell's old command) had been placed under General Hooker. The Ninth Corps, of Burnside's old force, was under General Reno. Sumner continued to command his own (Second) corps, and also controlled the Twelfth (Banks' old command), which was placed under General Mansfield, a veteran soldier, but who had not thus far been in the field. The Sixth Corps, under General Franklin, embraced the divisions of Smith (W F.), Slocum, and Couch. Porter's did not leave Washington until the 12th of September, and rejoined the army at Antietam. General H. J. Hunt, who had

The uncertainty at first overhanging Lee's intentions caused the advance from Washington to be made with much circumspection; and it might, perhaps, be fairly chargeable with tardiness, were there not on record repeated dispatches of the time from the general-in-chief, charging McClellan with too great a precipitancy of movement for the safety of the capital. The van of the army entered Frederick on the 12th of September, after a brisk skirmish at the outskirts of the town with the Confederate troopers left behind as a rear-guard. It was found that the main body of Lee's army had passed out of Frederick two days before, heading westward towards Harper's Ferry.

It is now necessary, for a just appreciation of the events of the Maryland campaign, that I should give an outline of the plan of operations which the Confederate commander had marked out for himself. This plan was simple, but highly meritorious. Lee did not propose to make any direct movement against Washington or Baltimore with the Union army between him and these points, but aimed so to manœuvre as to cause McClellan to uncover them. With this view, he designed, first of all, to move into Western Maryland and establish his communications with Richmond through the Shenandoah Valley. Then, by a northward movement, menacing Pennsylvania by the Cumberland Valley, he hoped to draw the Union army so far towards the Susquehanna as to afford him either an opportunity of seizing Baltimore or Washington, or of dealing a damaging blow at the army far from its base of supplies. His first movement from Frederick was, therefore, towards the western side of that mountain range which, named the Blue Ridge south of the Potomac, and the South Mountain range north of the Potomac, forms the eastern wall of the Shenandoah and Cumberland valleys—the former

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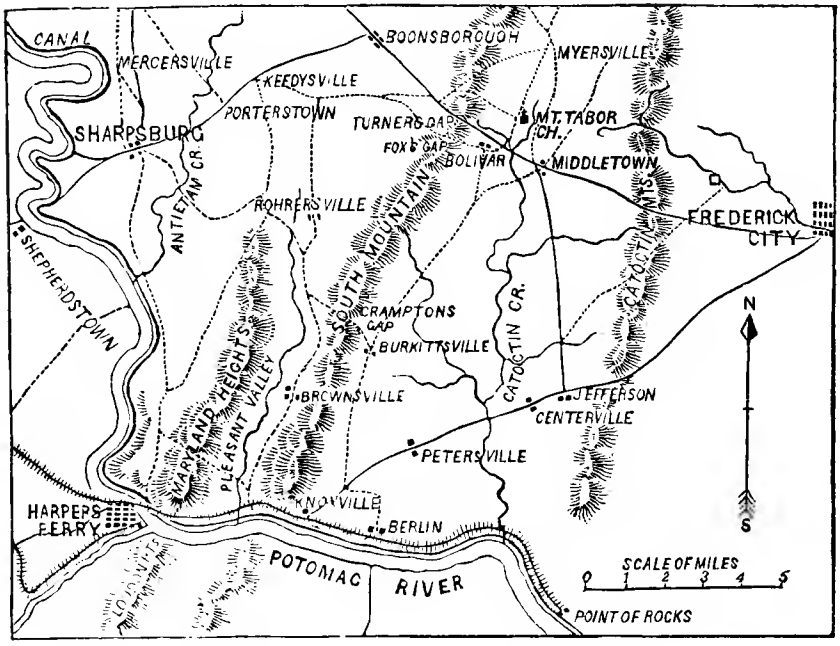
been in command of the reserve artillery on the Peninsula, relieved General Barry as chief of artillery, and remained in that position till the close of the war. General Pleasonton commanded the cavalry division. The army with which McClellan set out on the Maryland campaign, made an aggregate of eighty-five thousand men, of all arms.

his line of communications with Richmond and the latter his line of manœuvre towards Pennsylvania.



SKETCH OF MANŒUVRES ON ANTIETAM.

Now, at the time Lee crossed the Potomac, the Federal post at Harper's Ferry, commanding the *débouché* of the Shenandoah Valley, was held by a garrison of about nine thousand men, under Colonel D. H. Miles, while a force of twenty-five hundred men, under General White, did outpost duty at Martinsburg and Winchester. These troops received orders direct from General Halleck.

Lee had assumed that his advance on Frederick would cause the immediate evacuation of Harper's Ferry* by the

* "It had been supposed that the advance upon Frederick would lead to the evacuation of Martinsburg and Harper's Ferry, thus opening the line of communication through the Valley."—Lee's Report: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 28.

Union force, because that position, important as against a menace by way of the Shenandoah Valley, became utterly useless now that the Confederates were actually in Maryland; and the garrison, while subserving no purpose, was in imminent danger of capture. In this anticipation, Lee had proceeded solely on a correct military appreciation of what ought to have been done; and indeed General McClellan, who had no control over this force, urged the evacuation of the post the moment he learned Lee was across the Potomac. But it was the whim of General Halleck to regard Harper's Ferry as a point *per se* and in any event of the first importance to be held; and he would listen to no proposition looking to its abandonment. It is a remarkable illustration of the mighty part played in war by what is called accident that this gross act of folly which, as might have been expected, resulted in the capture of the entire garrison of Harper's Ferry, was, nevertheless, as will presently appear, a main cause of the ultimate failure of the Confederate invasion.

Finding that, contrary to his expectation, Harper's Ferry was not evacuated, it became necessary for Lee to dislodge that force before concentrating his army west of the mountains, and to this duty Jackson, with his own three divisions, the two divisions of McLaws, and the division of Walker, was assigned. Jackson was to proceed by way of Sharpsburg, crossing the Potomac above Harper's Ferry, and, investing it by the rear; McLaws was to move by way of Middletown on the direct route to the ferry, and seize the hills on the Maryland side known as Maryland Heights; Walker was to cross the Potomac below Harper's Ferry and take possession of the Loudon Heights. The advance was begun on the 10th: the several commanders were all to be at their assigned positions by the night of the 12th, cause the surrender by the following morning, and immediately rejoin the remainder of the army, with which Lee was to move to Boonsboro' or Hagerstown.

Up to the time of Lee's leaving Frederick, McClellan's advance had been so tardy as to justify the Confederate commander in the belief that the reduction of Harper's Ferry

would be accomplished and his columns again concentrated before he would be called upon to meet the Union army. But this expectation was disappointed, and all Lee's plans for ulterior operations in Maryland were thwarted by a piece of good fortune that befell General McClellan at this time. There accidentally fell into the hands of the Union commander on the day of his arrival at Frederick a copy of Lee's official order for the above movements of his troops, whereby his whole plan was betrayed to his antagonist. Instructed of the project of his rival, McClellan immediately ordered a rapid movement towards Harper's Ferry; and Lee, unaware of what had happened, suddenly found the Union army pressing forward with an unwonted rapidity that threatened to disconcert all his plans. On the afternoon of the 13th, before Lee had received any word from Jackson, Stuart, who with his troopers was covering the Confederate rear, reported McClellan approaching the passes of South Mountain, and it became evident that if he were allowed to force these, he would be in position to strike Lee's divided columns, relieve the garrison at Harper's Ferry, and put a disastrous termination to the Confederate campaign. Lee had not intended to oppose any resistance to the passage of the South Mountain, and had already moved to Boonsboro' and Hagerstown to await Jackson's operations. But when the news of McClellan's approach reached him, he instantly ordered Hill's division back from Boonsboro' to guard the South Mountain passes, and instructed Longstreet to countermarch from Hagerstown to Hill's support.

McClellan, by his knowledge of Lee's movements, was so perfectly master of the situation, and the stake was so great as to authorize, indeed to demand, the very boldest action on his part. He knew the imperilled condition of the garrison at Harper's Ferry, which had by this time been placed under his control, and though its investment was the result of that absurd policy that, against his protest and in violation of sound military principle, had retained it in an untenable position, still he was bound to do his utmost to relieve it. McClellan

acted with energy but not with the impetuosity called for. If he had thrown forward his army with the vigor used by Jackson in his advance on Harper's Ferry, the passes of South Mountain would have been carried before the evening of the 13th, at which time they were very feebly guarded, and then debouching into Pleasant Valley, the Union commander might next morning have fallen upon the rear of McLaws at Maryland Heights, and relieved Harper's Ferry, which did not surrender till the morning of the 15th. But he did not arrive at South Mountain until the morning of the 14th; and by that time the Confederates, forewarned of his approach, had recalled a considerable force to dispute the passage.

The line of advance of the Union right and centre conducted across South Mountain by Turner's Gap, that of the left by Crampton's Gap, six miles to the southward. Franklin's corps was moving towards the latter; and Burnside's command (the corps of Reno and Hooker) had the advance by the former. The Confederate defence of Crampton's Pass was left to McLaws, who was engaged in the investment of Harper's Ferry from the side of Maryland Heights; but Turner's Pass, as commanding the *débouché* of the main highway from Frederick westward, was committed to the combined commands of Hill and Longstreet. This pass is a deep gorge in the mountains, the crests of which on each side rise to the height of one thousand feet. The gap itself is unassailable; but there is a practicable road over the crest to the right of the pass, and another to the left. The key-point of the whole position is a rocky and precipitous peak which dominates the ridge to the right of the pass. With a considerable force this position is very defensible; but when the advance of the Union force reached the mountain, on the morning of the 14th, it was guarded only by D. H. Hill's division of five thousand men. Reno's corps arrived near the pass early in the forenoon; but that officer directed all his efforts to the assault of the crest on the left—the key-point being overlooked. After a sharp fight Reno succeeded in dislodg-

ing the Confederate brigade opposed to him, and established his troops on the first ridge, but was unable to push beyond.* The commanding importance of the ground to the right of the pass soon developed itself, however, and on the arrival of Hooker's corps in the middle of the afternoon, he was directed to assault that position. By this time Hill had been re-enforced by two divisions of Longstreet. The ridge to the north of the turnpike is divided into a double crest by a ravine, and Hooker put in Meade's division on the right, and Hatch's on the left; Rickett's division being held in reserve. The ground is very difficult for the movement of troops, the hill-side being steep and rocky; but the advance was made with much spirit—the light-footed skirmishers leaping and springing up the slopes and ledges with the nimbleness of the coney. It was found that, owing to the precipitous figure of the mountain sides, the hostile artillery did little hurt; but the Confederate riflemen, fighting behind rocks and trees and stone walls, opposed a persistent resistance. They were, however, forced back, step by step; and by dark, Hooker's troops had carried the crest on the right of the gap. Now, as simultaneous with this, Gibbon with his brigade had worked his way by the main road well up towards the top of the pass, and as Reno's corps had gained a firm foothold on the crest to the left of the pass, it seemed that the position was carried; and though it was by this time too dark to push through to the western side of the mountain, yet the whole army was up, and with the position secured would in the morning force an issue by its own pressure. Yet these successes were not gained without a heavy sacrifice. Fifteen hundred men were killed and wounded in this severe struggle, and among those who fell was General Reno, commander of the Ninth Corps, an able and respected

* The Confederate brigade opposed to Reno was under General Garland, who was killed early in the action. "Garland's brigade," says General Hill, "was much demoralized by his fall, and the rough handling it had received; and had the Yankees pressed vigorously forward, the road might have been gained."—Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 112.

officer. The Confederate loss was above three thousand men, whereof fifteen hundred were prisoners.

The action at South Mountain deservedly figures as a brilliant affair; and the only adverse comment that may be made thereon will turn on the tardiness in commencing the attack; for, with a more vigorous conduct on the part of General Burnside, he might have forced the pass during the forenoon, while yet defended only by Hill's small force; and notwithstanding the previous delay, this would still have put McClellan in position to succor Harper's Ferry

During the contest at Turner's Gap, Franklin was struggling to force the passage of the ridge at Crampton's Pass, defended by a part of the force of McLaws, who was then engaged in the investment of Harper's Ferry.* The position here was similar to that at Turner's Gap, and the operations were of a like kind. Forming his troops with Slocum's division on the right of the road and Smith's on the left, Franklin advanced his line, driving the Confederates from their position at the base of the mountain, where they were protected by a stone wall, and forced them back up the slope of the mountain to near its summit, where, after an action of three hours, the crest was carried.† Four hundred prisoners, seven hundred stand of arms, one piece of artillery, and three colors were captured in this spirited action. Franklin's total loss was five hundred and thirty-two, and the corps rested on its arms, with its advance thrown forward into Pleasant Valley. During the night, the Confederates at Turner's Gap

* Crampton's Pass debouches into Pleasant Valley directly in the rear of and but five miles from Maryland Heights, opposite Harper's Ferry. McLaws on learning the approach of the Union force, and seeing the danger of this attack in his rear, sent back General Cobb, with three brigades, instructing him to hold Crampton's Pass until the work at Harper's Ferry should be completed, "even if he lost his last man in doing it." McLaws' Report: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 165.

† Slocum's line, on the right, formed of Bartlett's and Torbett's brigades, supported by Newton, carried the crest. Smith's line, formed of Brooks' and Irwin's brigades, was disposed for the protection of Slocum's flank, and charged up the mountain simultaneously. The brunt of the action fell upon Bartlett's command.

withdrew, and the Union right and centre in the morning passed through to the west side of the mountain.

If not too late, McClellan was now in a position to succor the garrison at Harper's Ferry, whose situation was one of almost tragic interest.* But by a hapless conjuncture, on the very morning that the army broke through the South Mountain, and was in position to relieve the beleaguered force, it was surrendered by its commander. I shall briefly detail the circumstances under which this took place.

Leaving Frederick on the 10th, Jackson made a very rapid march by way of Middletown, Boonsboro', and Williamsport, and on the following day crossed the Potomac into Virginia, at a ford near the latter place. Disposing his forces so that there should be no escape for the garrison from that side, he moved down towards Harper's Ferry. On his approach, General White with the garrison of Martinsburg evacuated that place, and retired to Harper's Ferry, the rear of which, at Bolivar Heights, Jackson reached on the 13th, and immediately proceeded to put himself in communication with Walker and McLaws, who were respectively to co-operate in the investment from Loudon and Maryland heights. Walker was already in position on Loudon Heights, and McLaws was working his way up Maryland Heights. The latter position is the key-point to Harper's Ferry, as a brief description will show.

The Elk Ridge, running north and south across parts of Maryland and Virginia, is rifted in twain by the Potomac, and the cleavage leaves on each side a bold and lofty abutment of rock. Maryland Heights is the name given the steep on the north bank, and Loudon Heights the steep on the south bank. Between Loudon Heights and Harper's Ferry the Shenandoah breaks into the Potomac, and to the rear of

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* To convey to Colonel Miles the information that the army was coming to his relief, he sent repeated couriers to run the gauntlet of the investing lines, and all along the march he fired signal guns to announce the progress of his approach.

the ferry is a less bold ridge, named Bolivar Heights, which falls off in graceful undulations southward into the Valley of the Shenandoah. The picturesque little village of Harper's Ferry lies nestling in the basin formed by these three heights, which tower into an almost Alpine sublimity. A line drawn from any one mountain-top to either of the others must be two miles in stretch; yet rifle-cannon crowning these heights can easily throw their projectiles from each to other—a sort of Titanic game of bowls which Mars and cloud-compelling Jove might carry on in sportive mood. But the Maryland Height is the Saul of the triad of giant mountains, and far o'ertops its fellows. Of course, it completely commands Harper's Ferry, into which a plunging fire even of musketry can be had from it. While therefore Harper's Ferry is itself the merest military trap, lying as it does at the bottom of this rocky funnel, yet the Maryland Height is a strong position, and if its rearward slope were held by a determined even though small force, it would be very hard and hazardous to assail.

Colonel Miles, in the distribution of his command, had posted on Maryland Heights a force under Colonel Ford, retaining the bulk of his troops in Harper's Ferry. This was a faulty disposition. He should have evacuated the latter place, and transferred his whole force to Maryland Heights, which he could readily have held till McClellan came up. Under his instructions from General Halleck, he was bound, however, to hold Harper's Ferry to the last extremity, and, interpreting this order literally as applying to the town itself, he refused to take this step when urged to it by his subordinates. But what was worse, Ford, after opposing a very feeble and unskilful resistance to McLaws' attack on the 13th, retired to Harper's Ferry, spiking his guns and toppling them down the declivity. Thus Maryland Heights was abandoned altogether. McLaws succeeded in dragging some pieces up the rugged steep, and Jackson and Walker being already in position, the investment of Harper's Ferry was by the morning of the 14th complete. The Bolivar and

Loudon heights were crowned with artillery during the day, and at dawn of the 15th the three co-operating forces opened fire upon the garrison. They were already doomed men; and in two hours or less the white flag was raised in token of surrender.

The actual surrender was made by General White, Colonel Miles having been mortally wounded in the operations attending the reduction of the place.

Jackson received the capitulation of eleven thousand men, and came into possession of seventy-three pieces of artillery, thirteen thousand small-arms, and a large quantity of military stores. But leaving the details to be arranged by his lieutenant, General Hill (A. P.), the swift-footed Jackson turned his back on the prize he had secured, and headed towards Maryland to unite with Lee, who was eagerly awaiting his arrival at Sharpsburg.

The successful lodgment McClellan had gained on the crest of South Mountain by the night of the 14th admonished Lee that he might no longer hope to hold Turner's Pass. He therefore withdrew Longstreet and D. H. Hill across Pleasant Valley and over Elk Ridge into the valley beyond—the valley of the Antietam. In the morning McClellan passed through his right and centre and took position at Boonsboro' Meantime, Franklin, having the night previously swept away the adverse force, passed through Crampton's Pass and debouched into Pleasant Valley in the rear of McLaws. This seemed a favorable opportunity to destroy that force, which was isolated from all the rest of Lee's army; but, appreciating his danger, the Confederate officer, in the morning, withdrew all his force from Maryland Heights, with the exception of a single regiment, and formed his troops in battle order across Pleasant Valley to resist any sudden attack, and before Franklin could make his dispositions to strike, the garrison at Harper's Ferry had surrendered. This left free exit for McLaws, who skil fully retired down the Valley towards the Potomac, which he repassed at Harper's Ferry, and by a detour by way of Shepherdstown joined Lee at Sharpsburg.

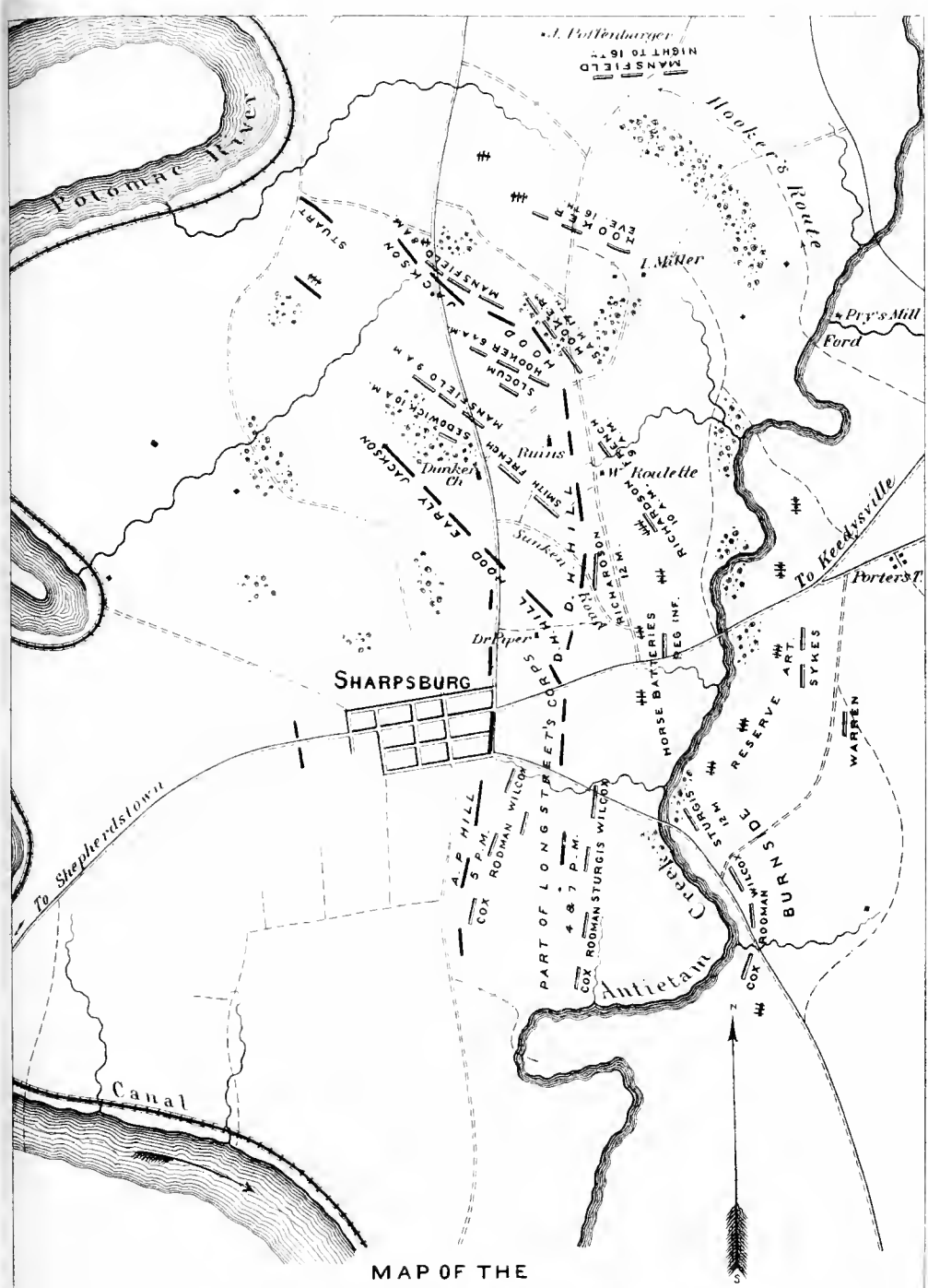
Upon the retirement of the Confederates on the morning of the 15th, McClellan pushed forward his whole army in pursuit; but after a few miles' march, the heads of the columns were brought to a sudden halt at Antietam Creek, a rivulet that, running obliquely to the course of the Potomac, empties into it six miles above Harper's Ferry. On the heights crowning the west bank of this stream, Lee, with what force he had in hand, took his stand to oppose McClellan's pursuit, and form a point of concentration for his scattered columns.

II.

THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM.

Whatever ulterior purposes Lee may have had touching the prosecution of the Maryland invasion, affairs had so worked together that it had become now absolutely necessary for him to stand and give battle. Whether he designed abandoning the aggressive and repassing the Potomac, or purposed manœuvring by the line of Western Maryland towards Pennsylvania, he was obliged first of all to take up a position on which he might unite his divided forces, closely pressed by the advancing Union columns, and receive the attack of his antagonist. The circumstances were such that a battle would necessarily decide the issue of the invasion.

It was late in the afternoon of the 15th when the Army of the Potomac drew up on the left bank of Antietam Creek, on the opposite side of which the Confederate infantry was seen ostentatiously displayed. The day passed in observation of the position, and next morning that portion of the Confederate force that had been engaged in the investment of Harper's Ferry rejoined Lee. The Confederate commander formed his troops on a line stretched across the angle formed by the Potomac and Antietam; and as the Potomac here makes a sharp curve, Lee was able to rest both



MAP OF THE

BATTLE OF THE ANTIETAM

Fought Sept. 16 & 17th. 1862

Engraved for "Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac"

Scale of Miles. 0 1 2 3

Union Troops — Confederate Troops.

flanks on that stream, while his front was covered by the Antietam. The Confederate line was drawn in front of the town of Sharpsburg—Longstreet's command being placed on the right of the road from Sharpsburg to Boonsboro', and D. H. Hill's command on the left. From Sharpsburg a turnpike runs northward across the Potomac to Hagerstown, from which direction the position might be turned; and to guard against this, Hood's two brigades were placed on the left. Jackson's command was placed in reserve near the left. The 16th saw the whole Confederate force concentrated at Sharpsburg, except the divisions of McLaws, Anderson, and A. P Hill, which had not yet returned from Harper's Ferry. So greatly had the Confederate army become reduced by its previous losses and by straggling, that Lee was unable to count above forty thousand bayonets.

In this vicinity, the Antietam is crossed by four stone bridges; but three of these were covered by the hostile front, and so guarded as to forbid the hope of forcing a direct passage. McClellan therefore determined to throw his right across the creek by an upper and unguarded bridge, beyond the Confederate left flank, and when this manœuvre should have shaken the enemy, the centre and left were to carry the bridges in their front. Porter's corps was posted on the left of the turnpike, opposite Bridge No. 2; Burnside's Ninth Corps on the Rohrersville and Sharpsburg turnpike, directly in front of Bridge No. 3. The turning movement was intrusted to Hooker's corps, to be followed by Sumner's two corps. The examination of the ground, and the posting of troops, and of artillery to silence the fire of the enemy's guns on the opposite side of the Antietam, occupied the hours of the 16th till the afternoon,—a lively artillery duel being, meanwhile, waged between the opposing batteries.* Then,

* The Union batteries were those of Taft, Langner, Von Kleizer, and Weaver, placed on the ridge on the east side of the Antietam, between the turnpike bridge and the house occupied as general headquarters (Pry's). The practice of these batteries was excellent, and their superiority over the

towards the middle of the afternoon, Hooker's corps was put in motion, and crossed the stream at the upper bridge and ford, out of range of the hostile fire. Advancing through the woods, Hooker soon struck the left flank of the Confederate line, held by Hood's two brigades. Lee had anticipated a menace on that flank, and had made his dispositions accordingly,—Hood's brigades forming a crotchet on the Confederate left.* It was towards dusk when the troops of Hooker and Hood met; and after a smart skirmish between the Confederates and the division of Pennsylvania Reserves under General Meade, the opposing forces rested on their arms for the night, both occupying a skirt of woods which forms the eastern and northern inclosure of a considerable clearing on both sides of the Hagerstown road.

This movement across the Antietam on the 16th was of no advantage: it was made too late in the day to accomplish any thing, and it served to disclose to Lee his antagonist's purpose. The Confederate commander made no change in his dispositions, save to order Jackson, who lay in reserve in the rear of the left, to substitute a couple of his brigades in the room of Hood's worn-out command. General McClellan strengthened the turning column by directing Sumner to throw over, during the night, the Twelfth Corps under General Mansfield to the support of Hooker; and he ordered Sumner to hold his own corps (the Second) in readiness to cross early in the morning.

At the first dawn of the 17th the combat was opened by Hooker, who assailed the Confederate left, now held by

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Confederate artillery was soon apparent. Of this there is a very frank confession in the Report of General D. H. Hill: "An artillery duel between the Washington (New Orleans) Artillery and the Yankee batteries across the Antietam on the 16th was the most melancholy farce in the war. They could not cope with the Yankee guns."—Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 119.

* "In anticipation of a movement to turn the line of Antietam, Hood's two brigades had been transferred from the right to the left, and posted between D. H. Hill and the Hagerstown road."—Lee: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 32.

Jackson's force. The ground on which the battle opened was the same field on which the action continued to be waged during the day; and it has already been indicated in that opening extending to the east and west of the Hagerstown road bounded on each side by woods. In the fringe of forest on the eastern side of the road, Hooker had the previous evening effected a lodgment, though morning found the Confederate riflemen still clinging to its margin, while the main force of Jackson lay in the low timbered ground on the west side of the road,* where the Confederate troops were pretty well protected by outcropping ledges of rock. But though it had this tactical advantage for the defence, the position was really untenable; for it was completely commanded and seen in reverse by high ground a little to the right of where Hooker formed his line of battle. This height was the key-point of all that part of the field, and had it been occupied by Union batteries, as it should have been, the low timbered ground around the Dunker church where Jackson's line lay could not have been held fifteen minutes. It is a noteworthy fact, that neither General Hooker, nor General Sumner who followed him in command on this part of the field, at all appreciated the supreme importance of this point.† The former, beginning the combat, opened a direct attack with the view of carrying the Hagerstown road and the woods on the west side of it; and this continued to be the aim of all the subsequent attacks, which were made very much in detail, and thus lost the effective character they might have had with more comprehensive dispositions.

Hooker formed his corps of fourteen thousand men, with Doubleday's division on the right, Meade's in the centre, and Ricketts' on the left. Jackson opposed him with two divisions, Ewell's division being advanced to command the open ground, while the Stonewall division lay in reserve in the

* This road will be noted, in the accompanying sketch, as that on the margin of which stands what is known as the "Dunker church."

† It is equally remarkable that its importance was overlooked by the Confederates until several hours after the action opened.

woodland on the west side of the Hagerstown road. His entire force present numbered four thousand men—a great disproportion of numbers.* After an hour's bloody "bush-whacking," Hooker's troops succeeded in clearing the hither woods of the three Confederate brigades, which retired in disorder across the open fields, with a loss of half their reduced numbers.† The Union batteries on the opposite bank of the Antietam had secured an enfilade fire on Jackson's advanced and reserve line, and, together with the batteries in front, inflicted severe loss on the enemy. Hooker then advanced his centre under Meade to seize the Hagerstown road and the woods beyond. In attempting to execute this movement, the troops came under a very severe fire from Jackson's reserve division, which, joined by the two brigades of Hood

* Incredible though this return of the strength of Jackson's two divisions may appear, it is vouched for by official evidence. So reduced had his numbers become by the heavy losses of the campaign, and by the great straggling that attended the march through Maryland, that Jackson's old (Stonewall) division numbered but one thousand six hundred men. General J. R. Jones, who commanded this division at Antietam, says of it: "The division was reduced to the numbers of a small brigade, and, at the beginning of the fight, numbered not over one thousand six hundred men."—Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., pp. 222, 223. Of the number of the three brigades of Ewell's division holding the advanced line, General Early, who, at a subsequent part of the day, came into command of it, reports as follows: Lawton's brigade, one thousand one hundred and fifty; Hayes' brigade, five hundred and fifty; Walker's brigade, seven hundred. This would make a total for the two divisions of four thousand men—the number above given.

† "The terrible nature of the conflict in which these brigades had been engaged, and the steadiness with which they maintained their position, is shown by the losses they sustained. They did not retire from the field until General Lawton (commanding division) had been wounded and borne from the field; Colonel Douglas, commanding Lawton's brigade, had been killed; and the brigade had sustained a loss of five hundred and fifty-four killed and wounded out of one thousand one hundred and fifty, losing five regimental commanders out of six. Hayes' brigade had sustained a loss of three hundred and twenty-three out of five hundred and fifty, including every regimental commander and all of his staff; and Colonel Walker and one of his staff had been disabled, and the brigade he was commanding had sustained a loss of two hundred and twenty-eight out of less than seven hundred present, including three out of four regimental commanders."—Ibid., pp. 190, 191.

that had moved up in support, issued from the woods, and threw back Meade's line, which was much broken. At the same time, Ricketts' division on the left became hotly engaged with three brigades of Hill's division, which were at this time closed up on the right of Jackson in support; and Hooker's right division, under Doubleday, was held in check by the fire of several batteries of Stuart's horse-artillery posted on commanding ground on his right and front.

Hooker had suffered severely by the enemy's fire; but, worse still, had lost nearly half his effective force by straggling.* In this state of facts, his offensive power was completely gone; and, at seven o'clock, Mansfield's corps, which had crossed the Antietam during the night and lay in reserve a mile to the rear, was ordered up to support and relieve Hooker's troops. Of this corps, the first division, under General Williams, took position on the right, and the second, under General Greene, on the left. During the deployment, that veteran soldier, General Mansfield, fell mortally wounded. The command of the corps fell to General Williams, and the division of the latter to General Crawford, who, with his own and Gordon's brigade, made an advance across the open field, and succeeded in seizing a point of woods on the west side of the Hagerstown road. At the same time, Greene's division on the left was able to clear its front, and crossed into the left of the Dunker church. Yet the holding of the positions was attended with heavy loss; the troops, reduced to the attempt to hold their own, began to waver and break, and General Hooker was being carried from the field severely wounded, when, opportunely, towards nine o'clock, General Sumner with his own corps reached the field.†

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* McClellan: Report; Meade: Report.

† Of the extraordinary statement respecting this part of the battle made by General Hooker, in his evidence before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, it must be said, at least, that it is not justified by facts: "At that time [nine o'clock]," says he, "my troops were in the finest spirit: they had whipped Jackson, and compelled the enemy to fly, throwing away their arms, their banners, and saving themselves as best they could." (Report, vol. i., p.

The battle had now declared itself with great obstinacy between the Union right and Confederate left without having burst forth on any other part of the line. The action was fought very much in detail by both sides—each, as from time to time re-enforcements reached it, being able to claim a partial success. Hooker, after driving one of Jackson's divisions, was in turn forced back by the other; and Mansfield's corps, having caused this to retreat, found itself overmastered by the fresh battalions of Hood.* The combat, though very murderous to each side, had been quite indecisive. It was in this situation of affairs that Sumner's force reached the ground; and it seemed at first that this preponderance of weight thrown into the Union scale would give it the victory. The troops of Jackson and Hood had been so severely punished as to leave little available fight in them; so that, when Sumner threw Sedgwick's divisions on his right across the open field into the woods opposite—the woods in which Crawford had been fighting—he easily drove the shattered Confederate troops before him, and held definitive possession of the woods around the Dunker church. At the same time, Sumner advanced French's division on what had hitherto been the left, and Richardson's division still further to the left to oppose the Confederate centre under Hill. Richardson

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581.) Now not only is this contradicted by the facts above recited, and which are derived from the reports of both sides; but General Sumner, who at the time spoken of by General Hooker reached the field, says: "On going upon the field I found that General Hooker's corps had been dispersed and routed. I passed him some distance in the rear, where he had been carried wounded, but I saw nothing of his corps at all as I was advancing with my command on the field. I sent one of my staff-officers to find where they were, and General Ricketts, the only officer we could find, stated that he could not raise three hundred men of the corps." Sumner: Evidence on Antietam, vol. i., p. 368.

* General Sumner afterwards held the following language in regard to these partial attacks: "I have always believed that, instead of sending these troops into that action in driblets, had General McClellan authorized me to march these forty thousand on the left flank of the enemy, we could not have failed to throw them right back in front of the other divisions of our army on the left."—Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 368.

had got handsomely to work, and French had cleared his front, when disaster again fell on the fatal right. At the moment that Sedgwick appeared to grasp victory in his hands, and the troops of Jackson and Hood were retiring in disorder,* two Confederate divisions, under McLaws and Walker, taken from the Confederate right, reached the field on the left, and immediately turned the fortunes of the day.† A considerable interval had been left between Sumner's right division under Sedgwick and his centre division under French. Through this the enemy penetrated, enveloping Sedgwick's left flank, and, pressing heavily at the same time on his front, forced him out of the woods on the west side of the Hagerstown road, and back across the open field and into the woods on the east side of the road—the original position held in the morning.‡ The Confederates, content with dislodging the Union troops, made no attempt to follow up their advantage, but retired to *their* original position also.

We must now look a little to Sumner's other divisions—to French and Richardson on his centre and left. When the pressure on Sedgwick became the hardest, Sumner sent orders to French to attack, as a diversion in favor of the former. French obeyed, with the brigades of Kimball and

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* Jackson admits that his troops had "fallen back some distance to the rear" (Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 104); but the reports of the commanders that came upon the ground to take the place of his troops give this "falling back" the character of a disorderly rout.

† The fact that it was the oncoming of these divisions that decided the action on Sumner's right is plainly marked by the time of their arrival, which is put down in all the Confederate reports at ten o'clock. Sumner's corps had arrived at nine.

‡ Of this attack, McLaws says: "The troops were immediately engaged, driving the enemy before them in magnificent style, at all points, sweeping the woods with perfect ease. They were driven not only through the woods, but over a field in front of the woods, and over two high fences beyond, and into another body of woods over half a mile distant from the commencement of the fight."—Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 170. See also reports of his brigade commanders—Semnes, Ibid., p. 349; Barksdale, p. 351; Kershaw, p. 353.

Weber, and succeeded in forcing back the enemy to a sunken road which runs almost at right angles with the Hagerstown road. This position was held by the division of D. H. Hill, three of whose brigades had been advanced to assist Jackson in his morning attacks; and it was these that were assailed by French and driven back in disorder to the sunken road.* Uniting here with the other brigades of Hill, they received the attacks both of French and of Richardson's division to his left.

The latter division was composed of the brigades of Meagher, Caldwell, and Brooke. Meagher first attacked, and fought his way to the possession of a crest overlooking the sunken road in which Hill's line was posted. After sustaining a severe musketry fire, by which it lost severely, this brigade, its ammunition being expended, was relieved by the brigade of Caldwell—the former breaking by companies to the rear, and the latter by companies to the front. Caldwell immediately became engaged in a very determined combat, and was supported by part of Brooke's brigade, the rest of the latter being posted on the right to thwart an effort on the part of the enemy to flank in that direction. The action here was of a very animated nature; for Hill, being re-enforced by the division of Anderson,† assumed a vigorous offensive, and endeavored to seize a piece of high ground on the Union left,

* These brigades were respectively those of Colquitt, Ripley, and McRae; and General Hill mentions the following curious circumstance as the cause of the repulse that befell them: "The men advanced with alacrity, secured a good position, and were fighting bravely, when Captain Thompson, Fifth North Carolina, cried out, 'They are flanking us!' This cry spread like an electric shock along the ranks, bringing up vivid recollections of the flank fire at South Mountain. In a moment they broke and fell to the rear. Efforts were made to rally them in the bed of an old road, nearly at right angles to the Hagerstown pike, and which had been their position previous to the advance."—Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 115.

† "In the mean time, General R. H. Anderson reported to me with some three or four thousand men as re-enforcements to my command. I directed him to form immediately behind my men."—Hill: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 116.

with the view of turning that flank. This manœuvre was, however, frustrated by the skill and promptitude of Colonel Cross of the Fifth New Hampshire (Caldwell's brigade), who, detecting the danger, moved his regiment towards the menaced point. Between his command and the Confederate force there then ensued a spirited contest—each endeavoring to reach the high ground, and both delivering their fire as they marched in parallel lines by the flank.* The race was won by Cross. The effort to flank on the right was handsomely checked by Brooke, French, and Barlow—the latter of whom, changing front with his two regiments obliquely to the right, poured in a rapid fire, compelling the surrender of three hundred prisoners with two standards. A vigorous direct attack was then made, and the troops succeeded in carrying the sunken road and the position, in advance, around what is known as Piper's House, which, being a defensible building, formed, with its surroundings, the citadel of the enemy's strength at this part of the line. The enemy was so much disorganized in this repulse that only a few hundred men were rallied on a crest near the Hagerstown road. This slight array formed the whole Confederate centre; and there is little doubt that a more energetic following up of the success gained would have carried this position and fatally divided Lee's wings.† The few Confederates showed a very bold front, however, and, deceived by this, Richardson contented

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* Report of Richardson's division. (This report is made by General Hancock, who was assigned to the command on the field of Antietam—General Richardson having been mortally wounded during the forenoon.)

† This inference is strongly justified by the evidence of the Confederate reports. General Hill says: "There were no troops near to hold the centre except a few hundred rallied from various brigades. The Yankees crossed the old road, which we had occupied in the morning, and occupied an orchard and cornfield in advance of it. *Affairs looked very critical.* They had now got within a few hundred yards of the hill which commanded Sharpsburg and our rear. I was satisfied, however, that the Yankees were so demoralized that a single regiment of fresh men could drive the whole of them in our front across the Antietam. I got up about two hundred men, who said that they were willing to advance to the attack if I would lead them. We met, however, with a

himself with taking up a position to hold what was already won.

Three out of the six corps of the Army of the Potomac, and they the strongest, had thus been drawn into the seething vortex of action on the right; and each in succession, while exacting heavy damage of the enemy, had been so punished as to lose all offensive energy; so that noon found them simply holding their own. Porter with his small reserve corps, numbering some fifteen thousand men, held the centre, while Burnside remained inactive on the left, not having yet passed the Antietam.* Now, between twelve and one o'clock, Franklin with two divisions of his corps, under Slocum and W F. Smith (Couch remaining behind to occupy Maryland Heights), reached the field of battle, from where the action at Crampton's Pass had left him. General McClellan had designed retaining Franklin on the east side of the Antietam, to operate on either flank or on the centre, as circumstances might require. But by the time he neared the field, the strong opposition developed by the attacks of Hooker and Sumner rendered it necessary for him to be immediately pushed over the creek to the assistance of the right.† The arrival of Franklin was opportune, for Lee had now accumulated so heavily on his left, and the repulse of Sumner's right under Sedgwick had been so easily effected, that the enemy began to show a disposition to resume the offensive—directing his efforts against that still loose-jointed portion of Sumner's harness, between his right and centre. General

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warm reception, and the little command was broken and dispersed. Colonel Iverson had gathered up about two hundred men, and I sent them to the right to attack the Yankees in flank. They drove them back a short distance, but, in turn, were repulsed. These two attacks, however, had a most happy effect. The Yankees were completely deceived by their boldness, and induced to believe that there was a large force in our centre."—Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 117.

* The left of Sumner's command was sustained by Pleasonton's cavalry division and the horse batteries, to whose support most of Sykes' division (Porter's corps) in the afternoon crossed the Antietam

† McClellan: Report, pp. 385, 386.

Smith, with quick perception of the needs of the case, of his own accord filled up this interval with a part of his division; and his third brigade, under Colonel Irwin, charged forward with much impetuosity, and drove back the advance until abreast the Dunker church. Though Irwin could not hold what he had wrested from the Confederates, his boldness, seconded by another charge made soon after by the Seventh Maine Regiment alone, served to quell the enemy's aggressive ardor. Franklin then formed the rest of his available force in a column of assault, with the intent to make another effort to gain the enemy's stronghold in the rocky woodland west of the Hagerstown turnpike—the woods Hooker had striven for, and Sumner had snatched and lost. But Sumner having command on the right, now intervened to postpone further operations on that flank, as he judged the repulse of the only remaining corps available for attack would peril the safety of the whole army.*

It is now necessary to look to the other end of the Union line, held by the Ninth Corps under Burnside. This force lay massed behind the heights on the east bank of the Antietam, and opposite the Confederate right, which it was designed he should assail after forcing the passage of the Antietam by the lower stone-bridge. The part assigned to General Burnside was of the highest importance, for a successful attack by him upon the Confederate right would, by carrying the Sharpsburg crest, force Lee from his line of retreat by way of Shepherdstown. General McClellan, appreciating the full effect of an attack by his left, directed Burnside early in the morning to hold his troops in readiness† to assault the bridge in his front. Then, at eight o'clock, on learning how much opposition had been developed by Hooker, he ordered Burnside to carry the bridge, gain possession of

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* Franklin: Report of Antietam.

† "Early on the morning of the 17th, I ordered General Burnside to form his troops and hold them in readiness to assault the bridge in his front and to await further orders."—McClellan: Report, p. 389.

the heights, and advance along their crest upon Sharpsburg, as a diversion in favor of the right. Burnside's tentative were frivolous in their character; and hour after hour wen by, during which the need of his assistance became more an more imperative, and McClellan's commands more and mor urgent. Five hours, in fact, passed, and the action on th right had been *concluded* in such manner as has been seen before the work that should have been done in the morning was accomplished. Encouraged by the ease with which th left of the Union force was held in check, Lee was free t remove two-thirds of the right wing under Longstreet— namely, the divisions of McLaws and Walker—and this forc he applied at the point of actual conflict on his left, where as has already been seen, the arrival of these divisions serve to check Sumner in his career of victory, and hurl back Sedg wick. This step the Confederate commander never woul have ventured on had there been any vigor displayed on th part of the confronting force; yet this heavy detachmen having been made from the hostile right, should have ren dered the task assigned to General Burnside one of com parative ease, for it left on that entire wing but a single hos tile division of twenty-five hundred men under General Jones and the force actually present to dispute the passage of th bridge did not exceed four hundred.† Nevertheless, it wa one o'clock, and after the action on the right had been deter mined, before a passage was effected; and this being done two hours passed before the attack of the crest was made.

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* McClellan: Report, p. 390.

† These statements, surprising though they may seem, are not made a random, but rest on a sure basis of official evidence. General Jones, wh commanded the entire right, says: "When it is known that on that morning my whole command of six brigades, comprised only two thousand four hun dred and thirty men, the enormous disparity of force with which I contended can be seen."—Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 219 The force covering the bridge-head consisted of two regiments under General Toombs, numbering four hundred and three men.—Ibid.

‡ "Though the bridge and upper ford were thus left open to the enemy, h moved with such extreme caution and slowness, that he lost nearly two hour

This was successfully executed at three o'clock, the Sharpsburg ridge being carried and a Confederate battery that had been delivering an annoying fire, captured. It was one of the many unfortunate results of the long delay in this operation on the left that just as this success was gained, the division of A. P. Hill, which Jackson had left behind to receive the surrender of Harper's Ferry, reached the field from that place by way of Shepherdstown,* and uniting his own re-enforcement of two thousand men† with the troops of Jones that had been broken through in the attack, he assumed the offensive, recaptured the battery, and drove back Burnside over all the ground gained, and to the shelter of the bluff bordering the Antietam. This closed the action on the left, and as that on the right had been suspended, the battle ceased for the day. It was found that the losses on the Union side made an aggregate in killed and wounded of twelve thousand five hundred men; while the Confederate loss proves to have been above eight thousand.‡

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in crossing and getting into action on our side of the river; about which time General A. P. Hill's division arrived from Harper's Ferry."—Toombs' Report: Ibid., p. 324.

* This conjuncture is obtained by a comparison of the time of the attack and of the arrival of Hill. The assault was made about three o'clock, and Hill began to arrive about half-past two. "The head of my column arrived upon the battle-field of Sharpsburg, a distance of seventeen miles, at half-past two, and, reporting in person to General Lee, he directed me to take position on our right."—Hill: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 128.

† "The three brigades of my division actively engaged did not number over two thousand men, and these, with the help of my splendid batteries, drove back Burnside's corps of fifteen thousand men."—Hill: Ibid., p. 129. It appears, however, from Toombs' Report (Ibid., p. 325), that his brigade also aided in this counter-attack.

‡ I give this only as an approximate estimate. General Lee gives his aggregate loss in killed and wounded in the Maryland campaign as ten thousand two hundred and ninety-one. As the killed and wounded in all the other actions save Antietam were not above two thousand two hundred and ninety-one, it leaves about eight thousand for the casualties of that battle. General McClellan states that about two thousand seven hundred of the Confederate dead were buried; and taking this as a basis, and counting the usual propor-

The morning of the 18th brought with it the grave question for McClellan whether to renew the attack or to defer it, even with the risk of Lee's retirement. After anxious deliberation, he resolved to defer attack* during the 18th, with the determination, however, to renew it on the 19th, if re-enforcements, expected from Washington, should arrive. But during the night of the 18th, Lee withdrew across the Potomac, and by morning he stood again with his army on the soil of Virginia. This inactivity of McClellan after Antietam, has been made the theme for so much animadversion, that it may be proper to set forth briefly the facts that should guide criticism in this case.

It should first of all be borne in mind that the action at Antietam, though a victory in its results, seeing that it so crippled Lee's force as to put an end to the invasion, was tactically a drawn battle—a battle in which McClellan had suffered as much as he had inflicted. In such cases, it requires in the commander a high order of moral courage to renew battle. An ordinary general, overwhelmed with his own losses, the sum and details of which forcibly strike his mind, and powerfully appeal to his sensibilities, is apt to lose sight of those equal, or perhaps greater, suffered by the enemy; and hence indecision, timidity, and consequent inaction. What McClellan knew was that the battle had cost the terrible sacrifice of over twelve thousand men; that two of his corps were completely shattered, and that his oldest generals counselled a cessation of operations. He did not know, what is now a matter of historic certainty, that the Confederate army was by this time frightfully disorganized and almost at the end of its supplies both of food and ammunition. The general situation was, moreover, such as to inspire a circumspect policy on the part of McClellan; for Virginia had been lost, and Maryland was invaded, and his

tion of five wounded to one killed, the aggregate would be very much in excess of General Lee's statement. But it is needless to sound deeper in this sea of blood.

* McClellan's Report, p. 211.

army was all that stood between Lee and Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia.

The conduct of a commander should be judged from the facts actually known to him; and these were the facts known to General McClellan. Nevertheless, I make bold to say (and in doing so I think I am seconded by the opinion of a majority of the ablest officers then in the army*), that General McClellan should have renewed the attack on the morning of the 18th. This opinion is grounded in two reasons—the one, general in its nature; the other, specific and tactical.

If it is possible to imagine a conjuncture of circumstances that would authorize a general to act *à l'outrance* and without too nice a calculation of risks, it is when confronting an enemy who, having moved far from his base, has crossed the frontier, and being foiled in his plan of invasion, is seeking to make good his retreat. This was the situation of Lee. He was removed a very great distance from his base; his plan of campaign had been baulked; his army, reduced to half the effective of that of his opponent, was in a condition of great demoralization, and he had a difficult river at his back. McClellan stood on his base, with every thing at his hand, and his troops, doing battle on loyal soil, fought with a *verve* and moral force they never had in Virginia and could be called on for unwonted exertion.

But in addition to these considerations there is a special reason that promised a more successful result of an attack on the 18th than that which had attended the action of the 17th. The battle-field was by this time better understood; and notably General McClellan had had his attention directed to that commanding ground on the right, before mentioned, which formed the key-point of the field; but which, strange to say, had been overlooked the day before. It was proposed to seize this point with a part of Franklin's corps; and had

* I may here say that this opinion is shared by General Franklin, an officer distinguished for the maturity of his military judgments. He, at the time urged a renewal of the attack on the morning of the 18th.

this been done, Jackson's position would have been wholly untenable. Besides, Burnside held the *débouché* of the bridge on the extreme left, and threatened the Confederate right; and Porter's corps was fresh—having been in reserve the day previous. If these considerations may be regarded as overruling the reasons that prompted McClellan to postpone attack, then his conduct must be looked upon as an error.

The Confederate campaign in Maryland lasted precisely two weeks. Its failure was signal. Designed as an invasion, it degenerated into a raid. Aiming to raise the standard of revolt in Maryland, and rally the citizens of that State around the secession cause, it resulted in the almost complete disruption of that army itself. Instead of the flocks of recruits he had expected, Lee was doomed to the mortification of seeing his force disintegrating so rapidly as to threaten its utter dissolution, and he confessed with anguish that his army was "ruined by straggling."* Having, therefore, lost all illusion respecting co-operation in Maryland, on which he had counted so confidently, it is not probable that Lee would have sought to push the invasion far, even had its military incidents turned out better for him; but from the moment he set foot across the Potomac circumstances so shaped themselves as to thwart his designs. The retention of the garrison at Harper's Ferry compelled him to turn aside

* The Confederate reports are replete with evidence of the enormous straggling that attended the Maryland campaign. Says Lee: "The arduous service in which our troops had been engaged, their great privations of rest and food, and the long marches without shoes over mountain roads, had greatly reduced our ranks before the action began. These causes had compelled *thousands of brave men to absent themselves, and many more had done so from unworthy motives.* This great battle was fought by less than forty thousand men on our side."—Report, p. 35. Says Hill: "Had all our stragglers been up, McClellan's army would have been completely crushed or annihilated. *Thousands of thievish poltroons had kept away from sheer cowardice.* The straggler is generally a thief, and always a coward, lost to all sense of shame: he can only be kept in the ranks by a strict and sanguinary discipline."—Reports of Maryland Campaign, vol. ii., p. 119.

and reduce that place. This required the presence of his whole army to cover the operation; and before it was completed, McClellan had come up and forced him into a corner, so that he never was able to carry out his original design of taking up a position in Western Maryland, whence to threaten Pennsylvania. Crippled at Antietam, he was fain to cross the Potomac, and seek in Virginia the opportunity to gather up the fragments of his shattered strength; for he had no longer the army with which the campaign was begun. More than thirty thousand men of the seventy thousand with which he set out from Richmond, were already dead or *hors de combat.* The remainder were in a sorry plight. Both armies in fact felt the need of some repose; and, glad to be freed from each other's presence,* they rested on their arms—the Confederates in the Shenandoah Valley, in the vicinity of Winchester, and the Army of the Potomac near the scene of its late exploits, amid the picturesque hills and vales of Southwestern Maryland.

III.

CLOSE OF McCLELLAN'S CAREER.

The movement from Washington into Maryland to meet Lee's invasion, was defensive in its purpose, though it assumed the character of a defensive-offensive campaign. Now that this had been accomplished and Lee driven across the frontier, it remained to organize on an adequate scale the means of a renewal of grand offensive operations directed at the Confederate army and towards Richmond. The completion of this work, including the furnishing of transportation, clothing, supplies, etc., required upwards of a month, and

* On the retreat of Lee, a not very judicious pursuit into Virginia was made by a part of Porter's corps, but the pursuing column was soon driven back across the Potomac with considerable loss.

during this period no military movement occurred, with the exception of a raid into Pennsylvania by Stuart. About the middle of October, that enterprising officer, with twelve or fifteen hundred troopers, crossed the Potomac above Williamsport, passed through Maryland, penetrated Pennsylvania, occupied Chambersburg, where he burnt considerable government stores, and after making the entire circuit of the Union army, recrossed the Potomac below the mouth of the Monocacy. He was all the way closely pursued by Pleasonton with eight hundred cavalry, but though that officer marched seventy-eight miles in twenty-four hours, he was unable to intercept or overtake his fast-riding rival.

On the recrossing of the Potomac by Lee after Antietam, McClellan hastened to seize the *débouché* of the Shenandoah Valley, by the possession of Harper's Ferry. Two corps were posted in its vicinity, and the Potomac and Shenandoah spanned by ponton-bridges. At first McClellan contemplated pushing his advance against Lee directly down the Shenandoah Valley, as he found that, by the adoption of the line east of the Blue Ridge, his antagonist, finding the door open, would again cross to Maryland. But this danger being removed by the oncoming of the season of high-water in the Potomac, McClellan determined to operate by the east side of the Blue Ridge, and on the 26th his advance crossed the Potomac by a ponton-bridge at Berlin, five miles below Harper's Ferry. By the 2d November the entire army had crossed at that point. Advancing due southward towards Warrenton, he masked the movement by guarding the passes of the Blue Ridge, and by threatening to issue through these, he compelled Lee to retain Jackson in the Valley. With such success was this movement managed, that on reaching Warrenton on the 9th, while Lee had sent half of his army forward to Culpepper to oppose McClellan's advance in that direction, the other half was still west of the Blue Ridge, scattered up and down the Valley, and separated from the other moiety by at least two days' march. McClellan's next projected move was to strike across obliquely westward and

interpose between the severed divisions of the Confederate force; but this step he was prevented from taking by his sudden removal from the command of the Army of the Potomac, while on the march to Warrenton. Late on the night of November 7th, amidst a heavy snow-storm, General Buckingham, arriving post-haste from Washington, reached the tent of General McClellan at Rectortown. He was the bearer of the following dispatch, which he handed to General McClellan:

GENERAL ORDERS, No. 182.

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
WASHINGTON, November 5, 1862.

By direction of the President of the United States, it is ordered that Major-General McClellan be relieved from the command of the Army of the Potomac, and that Major-General Burnside take the command of that army.

By order of the Secretary of War.

E. D. TOWNSEND,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

It chanced that General Burnside was at the moment with him in his tent. Opening the dispatch and reading it, without a change of countenance or of voice, McClellan passed over the paper to his successor, saying, as he did so: "Well, Burnside, you are to command the army."*

Thus ended the career of McClellan as head of the Army of the Potomac—an army which he had first fashioned, and then led in its maiden but checkered experience, till it became a mighty host, formed to war, and baptized in fierce battles and renowned campaigns. From the exposition I have given of the relations which had grown up between him and those who controlled the war-councils at Washington, it will have appeared that, were these relations to continue, it would have been better to have even before this removed McClellan—better for himself, and better for the country. This, indeed,

* Hurlbut: McClellan and the Conduct of the War.

was practically done, when, on the return from the Peninsula, his troops were sent forward to join Pope; but the disastrous termination of that campaign prompted the recall of McClellan as the only man who could make the army efficient for the trying emergency. Having accomplished his work of expelling Lee from Maryland, he entered, after a brief repose, on a new campaign of invasion; and it was in the midst of this, and on the eve of a decisive blow, that he was suddenly removed. The moment chosen was an inopportune and an ungracious one; for never had McClellan acted with such vigor and rapidity—never had he shown so much confidence in himself or the army in him. And it is a notable fact that not only was the whole body of the army—rank and file as well as officers—enthusiastic in their affection for his person, but that the very general appointed as his successor was the strongest opponent of his removal.

The military character of McClellan will not be difficult to define, however much it is yet obscured by malicious detraction on the one hand, or blind admiration on the other. He was assuredly not a great general; for he had the pedantry of war rather than the inspiration of war. His talent was eminently that of the cabinet; and his proper place was in Washington, where he should have remained as general-in-chief. Here his ability to plan campaigns and form large strategic combinations, which was remarkable, would have had full scope; and he would have been considerate and helpful to those in the field. But his power as a tactician was much inferior to his talent as a strategist, and he executed less boldly than he conceived: not appearing to know well those counters with which a commander must work—time, place, and circumstance. Yet he was improving in this regard, and was like Turenne, of whom Napoleon said that he was the only example of a general who grew bolder as he grew older.

To General McClellan personally it was a misfortune that he became so prominent a figure at the commencement of the contest; for it was inevitable that the first leaders should be sacrificed to the nation's ignorance of war. Taking this into

account, estimating both what he accomplished and what he failed to accomplish, in the actual circumstances of his performance, I have endeavored in the critique of his campaigns to strike a just balance between McClellan and history. Of him it may be said, that if he does not belong to that foremost category of commanders made up of those who have always been successful, and including but a few illustrious names, neither does he rank with that numerous class who have ruined their armies without fighting. He ranges with that middle category of meritorious commanders, who, like Sertorius, Wallenstein, and William of Orange, generally unfortunate in war, yet were, in the words of Marmont, "never destroyed nor discouraged, but were always able to oppose a menacing front, and make the enemy pay dear for what he gained."

VII.

THE CAMPAIGN ON THE RAPPAHANNOCK

NOVEMBER, 1862—JANUARY, 1863.

I.

CHANGE OF BASE TO FREDERICKSBURG.

To the general on whose shoulders was placed at this crisis the weighty burden of the conduct of the Army of the Potomac, the great responsibility came unsought and undesired. Cherishing a high respect for McClellan's military talent, and bound to him by the ties of an intimate affection, General Burnside naturally shrank from superseding a commander whom he unfeignedly regarded as his superior in ability. The manly frankness with which Burnside laid bare at once his feelings towards his late chief and his own sense of inadequacy for so great a trust was creditable to him, and absolved him in advance from responsibilities half the weight of which at least was assumed by those who thrust the baton into his unwilling hands.* To the public his modest shrink-

* General Burnside in his testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War makes a very frank statement of his opinion touching his own unfitness for the command of the army. "After getting over my surprise, the shock, etc., I told General Buckingham [the officer who brought the order from Washington assigning him to the command] that it was a matter that required very serious thought; that I did not want the command; that it had been offered to me twice before, and I did not feel that I could take it. * * I told them [his staff] what my views were with reference to my ability to exercise such a command, which views were those I had always unreservedly

A. E. Burnside

ing and solicitude appeared the sign of a noble nature, wronging itself in its proper estimate, and it was judged that he was a man of such temper that the exercise of great trusts would presently bring him a sense of confidence and power. And, indeed, severely just though Burnside's judgment of his own capacity afterwards proved, there was at the moment no man who seemed so well fitted to succeed McClellan. Of the other corps commanders of the Army of the Potomac, no one had yet proved his capacity in the exercise of independent command. But Burnside, as chief of the North Carolina expedition, brought the prestige of a successful campaign, and it was known that he had energy, perseverance, and above all, a high degree of patriotic zeal. Frank, manly, and generous in character, he was beloved by his own corps, and respected by the army generally. To the troops he was recommended as the friend and admirer of McClellan; and in this regard, as representing a legitimate succession rather than the usurpation of a successful rival, he seemed the man of all others best fitted to smooth over the perilous hiatus supervening on the lapse from power of a commander who was the idol of the army.

Upon assuming command of the army, General Burnside made at Warrenton a halt of ten days, during which time he endeavored to get the reins into his hands, and he carried into execution a purpose he had formed of consolidating the six corps of the Army of the Potomac into three Grand Divisions of two corps each*—the Right Grand Division being

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expressed—that I was not competent to command such a large army as this. I had said the same over and over again to the President and Secretary of War; and also, that if things could be satisfactorily arranged with General McClellan, I thought he could commaud the Army of the Potomac better than any other general in it."—Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 650.

* The Right Grand Division was composed of the Second Corps under General Couch and the Ninth Corps under General Wilcox. The Centre Grand Division, of the Third Corps under General Stoneman and the Fifth Corps under General Butterfield. The Left Grand Division, of the First Corps under General Reynolds and the Sixth Corps under General W F. Smith.

placed under General Sumner, the Centre Grand Division under General Hooker, and the Left Grand Division under General Franklin.

It need hardly be said that this protracted delay at the moment the army was manœuvring to fight a great battle, however necessary General Burnside may have deemed it,* was likely seriously to jeopardize the opportunity presented by the scattered condition of Lee's forces when the army reached Warrenton. At that time the Confederate right, under Longstreet, was near Culpepper, and the left, under Jackson, in the Shenandoah Valley—the two wings being separated by two marches; and it had been General McClellan's intent, by a rapid advance on Gordonsville, to interpose between Lee's divided forces. But this was not a matter that touched Burnside's plan; for he had already resolved to abandon offensive action on that line, and was determined to make a change of base to Fredericksburg on the Rappahannock.

It would be difficult to explain this determination on any sound military principle; for while the destruction of the hostile army was, in the very nature of things, the prime aim and object of the campaign, General Burnside turned his back on that army, and set out upon a seemingly aimless adventure to the Rappahannock, whither, in fact, Lee had to run in search of him. If it be said that Richmond was General Burnside's objective point, and that, regarding this rather than the hostile force, he chose the Fredericksburg line as one presenting fewer difficulties than that on which the army was moving (the line of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad), the reply is, that an advance against Richmond was, at this season, impracticable by any line; but a single march would

* In a like case, when the army was manœuvring to meet Lee's invasion of Pennsylvania, General Meade being nominated to succeed General Hooker, put the troops in motion without an hour's delay—the columns moving on as if no change had taken place. There were no circumstances that made the task easier in his case than in that of Burnside.

have put him in position to give decisive battle under circumstances eminently advantageous to him.*

Military history is a repository of the brightest inspirations of genius and the wildest excesses of folly. It is therefore difficult for a general to commit a blunder so gross but that it can be matched by a precedent. Burnside's change of line of manœuvre from one on which he had a positive objective—to wit, Lee's army—to Fredericksburg, where he had no objective at all, is paralleled by Dumourier's conduct in Holland in 1793, respecting which Jomini remarks, that he "foolishly abandoned the pursuit of the allies in order to transfer the theatre from the centre to the extreme left of the general field."† But such instances are for the warning, rather than the imitation of commanders.

The project of changing the line of operations to Fredericksburg was not approved at Washington, but it was assented to;‡ and on the 15th of November, General Burnside put his columns in motion from Warrenton. In the march towards Fredericksburg, it was determined that the army should

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* General Burnside, on coming into command of the army, drew up a plan of operations, which bears date, Warrenton, November 9, 1862, and is addressed to the general-in-chief. In this paper, urging the adoption of the Fredericksburg route, he states his intention of making "a movement upon Richmond from that point;" but the statement is made vaguely, and he postpones giving "the details of the movement" till some time "hereafter." In point of fact, General Burnside had not matured any definite plan of action, for the reason that he hoped to be able to postpone operations till the spring. He did not favor operating against Richmond by the overland route, but had his mind turned towards a repetition of McClellan's movement to the Peninsula; and in determining to march to Fredericksburg he cherished the hope of being able to winter there upon an easy base of supplies, and in the spring embarking his army for the James River. How he could have counted on being allowed to carry out a plan so adverse to the wishes of the Administration, and involving what the public temper could not be expected to brook, the inaction of the army for the winter, I do not undertake to say. I derive these revelations of General Burnside's motives and purposes from the corps-commander then most intimate in his confidence.

† Art of War, p. 106.

‡ Halleck: Report of Military Operations, 1862–3.

move by the north bank of the Rappahannock to Falmouth, where by a ponton-bridge, the boats for which were to be forwarded from Washington, it would cross to Fredericksburg and seize the bluffs on the south bank. It had been also designed to march a force by the south side of the Rappahannock to anticipate the possession of the heights, but this was not done. Sumner's Grand Division led the van, and on the afternoon of the 17th it reached Falmouth, opposite Fredericksburg. The town was at this time occupied by a regiment of Virginia cavalry, four companies of Mississippi infantry, and one light battery. When the head of Sumner's column reached the river these guns opened upon it from the heights above Fredericksburg, but they were in a few minutes silenced by a Union battery. The Rappahannock was at this time fordable at several points near Fredericksburg, and Sumner was exceedingly anxious to cross and take possession of the town and the heights in its rear, but was prevented from doing so by instructions from General Burnside.* The

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* Sumner: Report of Operations on the Rappahannock. In his evidence before the Congressional Committee, General Sumner says: "My orders were *not to cross.* But the temptation was strong to go over and take those guns the enemy had left. That same night I sent a note to General Burnside, asking if I should take Fredericksburg in the morning, should I be able to find a practicable ford, which, by the way, I knew when I wrote the note I could find. The general replied that *he did not think it advisable to occupy Fredericksburg until his communications were established,*" etc.—Report, p. 657.

From the above it will be seen how erroneous is the statement of General Lee, who, in his official report, says: "The advance of General Sumner reached Falmouth on the afternoon of the 17th, *and attempted to cross the Rappahannock, but was driven back* by Colonel Ball, with the Fifteenth Virginia Cavalry, four companies of Mississippi infantry, and Lewis's light battery."—Report of Movements on the Rappahannock, p. 38. In point of fact, the only engagement was a brief artillery duel between the Confederate battery above mentioned and Petitt's battery of ten-pounder Parrotts. The writer stood beside this battery at the time, and can testify that Petitt in fifteen minutes, by his excellent shots, caused the Confederate gunners to leave their guns; and the pieces were only dragged off by the men crawling up and attaching prolonges to them. General Lee's statement is almost too absurd to require serious reply.

following days, 19th and 20th, Hooker's and Franklin's grand divisions reached the Rappahannock, near which the entire Union army was now concentrated.

At the time the army began its march from Warrenton, Longstreet's corps was at Culpepper Courthouse, and Jackson's corps (with the exception of one division that had been transferred to the east side of the Blue Ridge) was still in the Shenandoah Valley. In this situation, nothing can be imagined easier than for Lee, by a simple manœuvre towards Warrenton, to have quickly recalled Burnside from his march towards Fredericksburg. The line of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad is the real defensive line for Washington; and experience has proved that a hostile force might always, by a mere menace directed against that line, compel the Union army to seek its recovery. General Lee either felt himself to be not in condition to attempt any offensive enterprise at this time, or he was prevented from doing so by instructions from Richmond; for he adopted the less brilliant alternative of planting himself directly in the path of the Union army.* As soon as Burnside's intention of moving towards Fredericksburg was fully disclosed, Jackson's corps was directed on Orange Courthouse, and Longstreet was instructed to march from Culpepper Courthouse on Fredericksburg, which point his van reached two days after Sumner's arrival at Falmouth. A few days afterwards, Jackson's corps also was called up to the Rappahannock, which Lee assumed as his new defensive line.†

Whatever may have been General Burnside's purpose in this transfer of the army, he could hardly have anticipated the result to which it conducted; for having voluntarily moved away from the hostile force, that much more than any geographical point was the proper objective of his efforts, he

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* "It is not always by taking position in the direct path of an enemy that his advance is opposed; but sometimes points may be occupied on the flank with much advantage, so as to threaten his line of operations, if he ventures to pass."—Dufour: Strategy and Tactics, p. 41.

† Lee: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 38.

chose a new route to Richmond only to find his antagonist confronting him thereon!

It was now even questionable whether he would be able to obtain possession of Fredericksburg. The passage of the Rappahannock was no longer the simple problem it had been when Sumner first drew up at Falmouth; for the rapidly arriving forces of Lee, gathering in strength on the menacing heights opposite, showed that the passage of the Rappahannock would cost a great battle. Nor was there at hand the means of making the crossing; for by a blunder, the responsibility of which seems to be divided equally between General Halleck and General Burnside himself, no ponton-train had reached the army; and when, a week afterwards, it arrived, Lee's whole army had arrived also. Lee distributed his corps along the south bank of the river, and began the rapid construction of defences along the crest of hills in rear of Fredericksburg, extending from the river about a mile and a half above the town to the Fredericksburg and Richmond Railroad, three miles below the town.* Day by day, new earthwork epaulements for the protection of artillery made their appearance on the Fredericksburg ridge, till, at the end of a few weeks, its terraced heights, crowned with the formidable enginery of war, presented an inferno of fire into which no man nor army would willingly venture.

Nevertheless, action was imperative; and as soon as Burnside had established his base at Aquia Creek, and connected it with his front of operations by the restoration of the railroad, preparations were begun for a crossing of the Rappahannock. Now, from the situation of the opposing forces, this operation obviously resolved itself into the alternative of forcing a direct passage at Fredericksburg, or of making a turning movement on one or the other of the Confederate flanks. The formidable character of the Fredericksburg defences, plainly visible from the north bank, seemed to preclude the former plan. A turning operation on the Con-

* Lee: Report of Operations on the Rappahannock, p. 39.

federate right, by a movement down the Rappahannock, was therefore discussed, and it was at first determined to make the passage at Skenker's Neck, twelve miles below Falmouth. But the preparations for this move were discovered by the enemy, who concentrated below to meet the threatened advance, and the purpose was abandoned.*

There remained the operation against the Confederate left by a movement up the Rappahannock. This plan does not, however, appear to have been entertained at this time, notwithstanding that it was what seemed to be dictated by sound military considerations. As a tactical operation, it was easier than to make the passage below Fredericksburg,† and it gave the direction of attack on Lee's left, which was his strategic flank; for the manœuvre, if successful, would throw the enemy back towards the coast. But there were other considerations that determined Burnside's plan. It was discovered that the preparations that had been made to cross at Skenker's Neck had so engaged Lee's attention, that he continued to hold a considerable force near that point; and Burnside judged that by making a direct crossing at Fredericksburg, he might surprise Lee thus divided. It will be conceded that if this purpose could have been successfully executed, the result would have been eminently advantageous; but it is far from clear how its successful execution could have been reasonably expected. The passage of a river by a great

* "On the 3d of December, my division was sent to Port Royal, a few miles below Skenker's Neck, to prevent the crossing of the Yankees at or near that point."—General D. H. Hill: Report of Operations on the Rappahannock. Up to the time of the battle of Fredericksburg, Longstreet's command held the heights at the town; Hill remained at Port Royal, and the rest of Jackson's corps "was so disposed as to support Hill or Longstreet, as occasion might require."—Lee: Report of Fredericksburg, p. 38. Hill on the 5th succeeded in driving off several Union gunboats that attempted to ascend the Rappahannock towards Fredericksburg.

† The Rappahannock below Fredericksburg increases rapidly in width, and at the first available point below Skinker's Neck would require one thousand feet of bridging, whereas above Banks' Ford from two to three hundred feet would suffice.—Warren: Report of Engineer Operations on the Rappahannock.

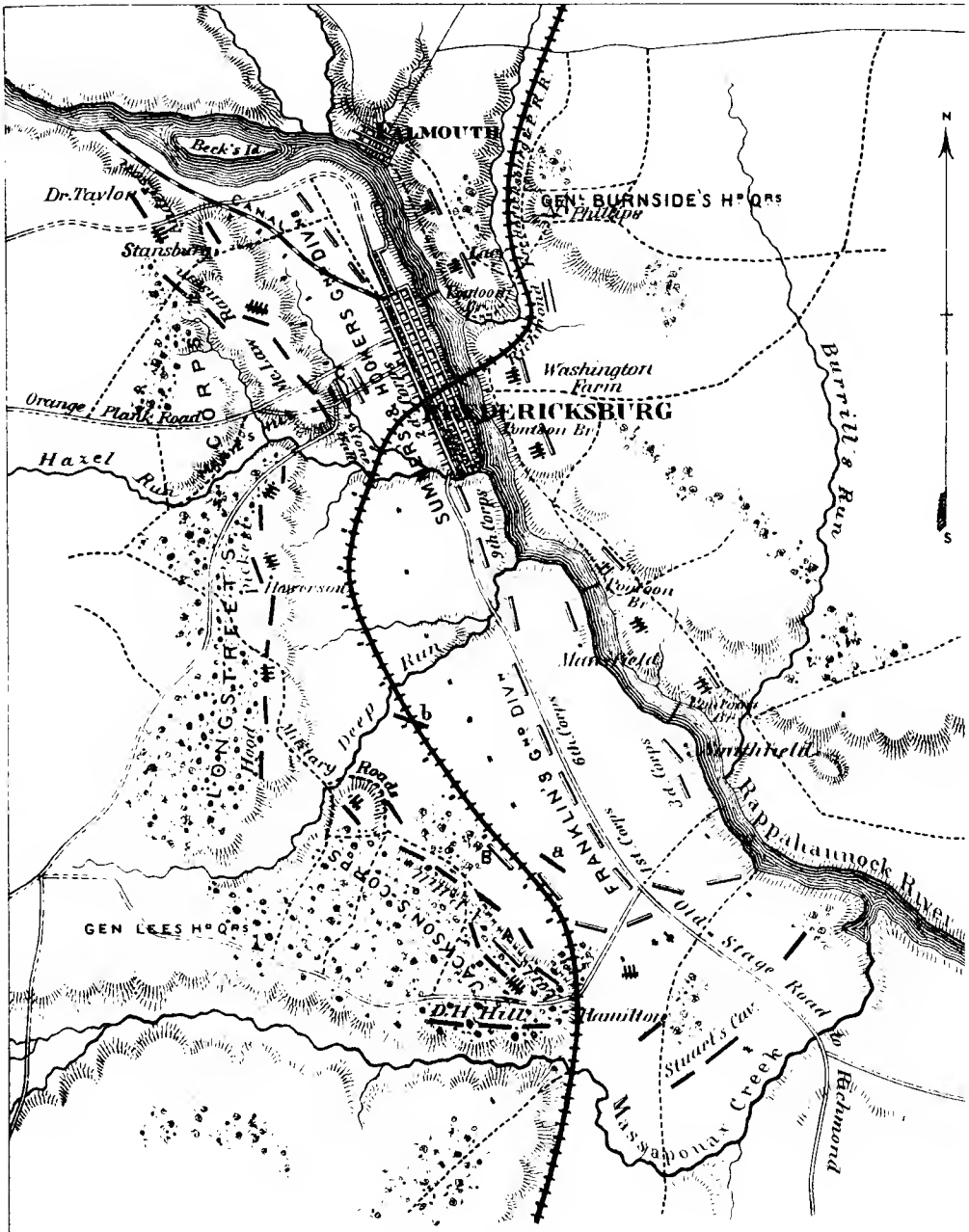
army, observed by a watchful opponent, is not an operation of the nature of a *coup de main*: and unless the enemy could neither see nor act, it was manifest he might concentrate his force as rapidly as the assailant could defile on the southern bank. Now this remote contingency of a surprise was the sole recommendation of the operation; for, otherwise, the attack of the fortified position behind Fredericksburg was not of a kind to be voluntarily undertaken. It was certainly a slender chance on which to hazard the issue of a great battle: but Burnside boldly accepted the risk. The 10th of December found the preliminary preparations completed, and it was determined to force the passage of the Rappahannock the following day.

II.

THE BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG.

Viewed as a tactical operation, the passage of the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg presented no formidable difficulties; and, indeed, the configuration of the ground is such that it is not in the power of an enemy occupying the south side to prevent it. On both banks of the stream, and parallel with its course, there runs a well-defined crest of hills; but that on the northern side, named the Stafford Heights, approaches close to the river's margin and commands the opposite side, where the heights stand at a distance of from three-quarters of a mile to a mile and a half from the bank. Union artillery could therefore control the intermediate plain, and it was believed that it could neutralize the efforts of the enemy to oppose the construction of bridges. But the thought of what must come after the crossing was one to give pause to every reflecting mind.

During the night of the 10th, under direction of Chief-of-Artillery Hunt, the Stafford Heights were crowned by a power-



Map of the

BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG

DEC. 13TH. 1862

0 1 2 3 miles

REFERENCES:

Union Troops.
A. Meade's furthest advance
B. Gibbons
C. French Hancock & Howard.

Confederate Troops.
a Charge of Trembler's Brig
b Lawe's

Engraved for "Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac"

ful artillery force, consisting of twenty-nine batteries of one hundred and forty-seven guns, destined to reply to the enemy's batteries, to control his movements on the plain, to command the town, and to protect and cover the crossing. At the same time, the troops were moved forward to positions immediately behind the ridge, and the ponton-trains were drawn down to the river's brink. It had been determined to span the stream by five ponton-bridges—three directly opposite the city, and two a couple of miles below. On the former, Sumner's and Hooker's Grand Divisions were to cross, while Franklin's Grand Division was to make the passage by the lower bridge.

Before dawn of the morning of the 11th, the boats were unshipped from the teams at the river's brink; and, swiftly and silently, the engineer troops proceeded to their work, amid a dense fog that filled the valley and water-margins, and through which the moving bridge-builders appeared as spectral forms. But no sooner did the artificers attempt to begin the construction of the bridges than they were met by volleys of musketry at short range from the riflemen posted opposite, behind the stone houses and walls of the river-street of Fredericksburg; and instantly the double report of a piece of ordnance boomed out on the dawn. This was the signal-gun that summoned the scattered Confederate corps to assemble for the long-expected attack.*

Aware, from the configuration of the ground, that he could not hope to prevent the passage of the stream, Lee made his dispositions to resist the advance after crossing.† He, how-

* "The artificers had but got fairly to work when the firing of two guns from one of the enemy's batteries announced that we were discovered. They were, doubtless, signal-guns."—W Swinton: Correspondence of New York Times, December 13, 1862. General Longstreet says: "At three o'clock, our signal-guns gave notice of the enemy's approach. The troops, being at their different camp-grounds, were formed immediately, and marched to their positions along the line."—Confederate Reports of Fredericksburg, p. 428.

† "The plain of Fredericksburg is so completely commanded by the Stafford Heights that no effectual opposition could be made to the construction of bridges or the passage of the river. Our position was therefore selected with a view to resist the enemy's advance after crossing."—Lee: Report of the Battle of Fredericksburg, p. 39.

ever, caused a couple of regiments of Mississippi riflemen to be posted behind the stone walls of the river-street of Fredericksburg, to resist, as long as might be, the construction of the bridges. An unexpected success attended their efforts. At the point assigned for Franklin's crossing, two miles below the town, there was no such protection for the sharp-shooters, and they were therefore covered by rifle-trenches near the river's brink. But Franklin soon succeeded in dislodging this force, and by noon two bridges were available for the passage.

The attempt to construct the bridges opposite the town, however, met a different fate; for the keen-eyed marksmen opposed so vigorous an opposition to the laying of the pontons that the little band of engineers, murderously thinned, was presently compelled to slacken work, and then cease altogether.* Several hours passed in renewed but unavailing efforts, and it became clear that nothing could be done until the sharp-shooters were dislodged from their lurking-places. To accomplish this, Burnside, at ten o'clock, gave the command to concentrate the fire of all the artillery on the city and batter it down. On this there opened from the massive concentration of artillery a terrific bombardment that was kept up for above an hour. Each gun fired fifty rounds, and I know not how many hundred tons of iron were thrown into the town. Of the effect of this, however, nothing could be seen, for the city was still enveloped in mist; but presently a dense pillar of smoke, defining itself on the background of fog, showed that the town had been fired by the shells; and at noon the curtain rolled up, and it was seen that Fredericksburg was in flames at several points. Appalling though the bombardment was as a spectacle, it was of very slight military

* Two regiments of Hancock's division, sent to cover the working parties engaged in building the bridge directly opposite Fredericksburg, soon lost from their thin ranks one hundred and fifty men.—Hancock: Report of Fredericksburg. These regiments were, the Fifty-Seventh New York, Lieutenant-Colonel Chapman, and the Sixty-Sixth New York, Lieutenant-Colonel Bull, of Zook's brigade, Hancock's division, Couch's corps.

advantage ;* the hostile force lay out of range behind the hills in rear of the town, and the artillerists were unable to give sufficient depression to their guns to reach the river-front of the city, along which the marksmen were posted, and the conflagration did not extend but died out.

During the thick of the bombardment, a fresh attempt was made to complete the one half-finished bridge opposite the town; but this too failed. The day was wearing away, and affairs were at a dead-lock. In this state of facts, the chief of artillery, Brigadier-General Hunt, an officer of a remarkably clear judgment, made a suggestion that proved the fit thing to be done. He proposed that a party should be sent across the river in the open ponton-boats, and that after dislodging or capturing the opposing force, the bridges should be rapidly completed. The Seventh Michigan Regiment and the Nineteenth and Twentieth Massachusetts regiments of Howard's division volunteered for this perilous enterprise.†

Ten ponton-boats were lying on the brink of the river waiting to be added to the half-finished bridge. Rushing down the steep bank, the party found shelter behind these and behind the piles of planking destined for the covering of the bridge; and in this situation they acted for fifteen or twenty minutes as sharp-shooters, to hold in check the Southern tirailleurs opposite, while the boats were pushed into the stream. This being accomplished, the men quickly sought the boats, pushed off, and the oarsmen pulling lustily, they in a few minutes, notwithstanding the severe fire by which several were killed or wounded, came under cover of the opposite bluff. Other boats followed, and so soon as an adequate number of men were assembled on the Southern

* It has, indeed, seldom been found that such bombardments of towns are of any avail, and, as Carnot observes, they are generally adopted only when real means are lacking. "Les bombardemens sont en général beaucoup moins à craindre qu'on ne le pense ordinairement. On les employe lorsqu'on manque de moyens réels."—De la Défense des Places Fortes: Bibliothèque Militaire, tome v., p. 523.

† Couch's Report of Fredericksburg.

side, they rushed up the steep bank, when the Confederate marksmen, seeing the new turn of affairs, emerged from cellar, rifle-pit, and stone wall, and scampered off up the streets of the town; but upwards of a hundred of them were captured. The buildings that had afforded shelter for the sharp-shooters were taken possession of, and the ponton-bridges were in a few minutes completed.

Thus by a simple stroke of genius was accomplished what the powerful enginery of a hundred guns had failed to effect. The affair was gallantly executed, and the army, assembled on the northern bank, spectators of this piece of heroism, paid the brave fellows the rich tribute of soldiers' cheers.

That evening Howard's division of Couch's corps crossed the river and occupied Fredericksburg, having a sharp skirmish in the upper streets of the town; and the next day, under cover of a fog, the other divisions of Couch's corps, and the Ninth Corps under General Wilcox (thus including the entire Right Grand Division under Sumner), passed to the south side of the Rappahannock. At the same time, Franklin crossed several divisions of his command by the bridges he had constructed below. The Centre Grand Division under Hooker was still held on the north bank of the river. The whole of the 12th of December was consumed in passing over the columns and reconnoitring the Confederate position. The troops lay on their arms for the night under that December sky: then dawned the morning of Saturday, the 13th, and this was to be the day of the battle.

Eight-and-forty hours had now passed since that signal gun, booming out on the dawn, sounded the note of concentration for the Confederate forces. Longstreet's corps was already at Fredericksburg; Jackson held the stretch of river below—his right at a remove of eighteen miles. But he had had abundant time to call in his scattered divisions, and the morning of the 13th found the entire Confederate army in position.* Whatever hope of a successful issue attached to

* "Early on the morning of the 13th, Ewell's division under General

General Burnside's plan of attack rested on the hypothesis that the crossing of the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg could be made a surprise.* But this expectation had been grievously disappointed, and it would have been a judicious measure then to have made other dispositions ;† for the naked enterprise, stripped of this hope, was of a very desperate character. A brief description of the *terrain* will serve to prove this.

The battle-field of Fredericksburg presents the character of a broken plain stretching back from the southern margin of the Rappahannock from six hundred yards to two miles, at which distance it rises into a bold ridge that forms a slight angle with the river, and is itself dominated by an elevated plateau. This ridge is, from Falmouth down to where it touches Massaponax Creek about six miles long, and this was the vantage-ground of the Confederates which they had strengthened with earthworks and crowned with artillery. In rear of the town the plain is traversed by a canal, at right angles with which run two roads leading up to the heights,‡ which rise abruptly at the distance of a few hundred yards.

Early, and the division of D. H. Hill, arrived after a severe night's march from their respective encampments in the vicinity of Buckner's Neck and Port Royal—the troops of Hill being from fifteen to eighteen miles distant from the point to which they were ordered."—Jackson: Report of Fredericksburg in Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 434.

* "I decided to cross here because I felt satisfied that *they did not expect us to cross here*, but down below."—Burnside's Evidence: Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 652.

† A commander of any fertility of resource might readily have devised modifications of the plan adapted to the altered state of affairs. I shall mention one move that would have been promising. The passage of the river at Fredericksburg was made for a real attack. Burnside might have converted it into a feint; he might have made threatening demonstrations of attack with Sumner's command, and meanwhile, he might have thrown Hooker's two corps up by Banks' or United States Ford, to execute a turning movemen on Lee's left. Hooker could have been strengthened almost indefinitely, and it is difficult to see why this operation should have failed of success.

‡ The road to the right leads from Fredericksburg to Culpepper; that to the left, named the "Telegraph Road," from Fredericksburg to Richmond.

This position formed the left of the Confederate line, and here Lee disposed Longstreet's corps. It was these heights that the right of the Union army under Sumner was destined to assail. The left of the Union line composed of the Grand Division of Franklin was, as already stated, two miles below Fredericksburg. The plain here stretches to a width of two miles, and is scolloped by spurs of hills, less elevated than those in the rear of the town and clothed with dark pines and leafless oaks. This position, forming the right of the Confederate line, was held by Jackson's corps; Stuart, with two brigades of cavalry and his horse artillery, formed the extreme right extending to Massaponax Creek.*

The nature of the ground manifestly indicated that the main attack should be made by Franklin on the left; for the field there affords ample space for deployment out of hostile range, whereas the plain in the rear of Fredericksburg, restricted in extent and cut up by ditches, fences, and a canal, caused every movement to be made under fire, presented no opportunity for manœuvre, and compelled a direct attack on the terraced heights, whose frowning works looked down in grim irony on all attempt at assault.

In the framing of his plan of battle, General Burnside conformed to the obvious conditions of the problem before him, and caused it to be understood that General Franklin, who, in addition to his own two corps, had now with him one of Hooker's corps—that is, about one-half the whole army—should make the main attack from the left, and that upon his success should be conditioned the assault of the heights in rear of the town by Sumner. Such, at least, was the plan of action as understood by his lieutenants, who were to carry it into execution. When, however, on the morning of the 13th, the commanders of the two bodies on the left and right, Generals Franklin and Sumner, received their instructions, it was found that having framed one plan of battle, General Burnside had determined to fight on another. I must add that the dis-

* Lee's Report: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 40.

positions were such that it would be difficult to imagine any worse suited to the circumstances.

Franklin, in place of an effective attack, was directed to make a partial operation of the nature of a reconnoissance in force, sending "one division, at least, to seize, if possible, the heights near Hamilton's Crossing, and taking care to keep it well supported and its line of retreat open," while he was to hold the rest of his command "in position for a rapid movement down the old Richmond road."* General Sumner's instructions were of a like tenor: he was to "form a column of a division for the purpose of pushing in the direction of the telegraph and plankroads, for the purpose of seizing the heights in rear of the town," and "hold another division in readiness to support in advance of this movement."†

General Burnside's plan thus contemplated two isolated attacks by fractional forces, each of one or at most two divisions, one on the right and the other on the left. Such partial attacks seldom succeed, and directed against such a citadel of strength as the Confederate position at Fredericksburg,

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* For the full text of the order from Burnside to Franklin, see Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 701.

On receipt of this order by Franklin, at half-past seven of the morning of the 13th, it was so different from what he had expected—so different from what General Burnside had given him reason to expect the night before—that he consulted with his two corps-commanders, General Reynolds and Smith, and they concluded from its terms that it meant there should be simply an armed reconnoissance with a single division, especially as the main point of the order, twice referred to, was that the command should be "*kept in readiness for a rapid movement along the old Richmond road.*"—Franklin's testimony: Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 708.

I have in my possession a copy of an elaborate statement on this point by General W. F Smith, sworn to by him before a magistrate. In this he says. "General Franklin showed the order immediately to General Reynolds and myself, and the conclusion of all of us was that General Burnside had determined *not to adopt* the plan of making the attack in force from the left. No one differed in what was intended by the order."

† I derive this statement of General Sumner's instructions from Couch's Report of the Battle of Fredericksburg, in which Burnside's orders to Sumner are given.

such feeble sallies were simply ludicrous. Not a man in the ranks but felt the hopelessness of the undertaking.*

The morning of the 13th found the sun struggling with a thick haze that enveloped Fredericksburg and overhung the circumjacent valley, delaying operation for some hours.† But towards ten o'clock the lifting fog revealed the left of the army, under Franklin, spread out on the plain, and showed the gleaming bayonets of a column advancing to the attack. I shall first detail the operations on the left and then return to Sumner's force, which remained yet in the town.

In obedience to his instructions, Franklin threw forward Meade's division, supported by Gibbon's division on the right, with Doubleday's in reserve for any emergency. Meade advanced across the plain, but had not proceeded far before he was compelled to stop and silence a battery that Stuart had posted on the Port Royal road, and which had a flank fire on his left. This done, he pushed on, his line preceded by a cloud of skirmishers, and his batteries vigorously shelling the heights and woods in his front. This caused considerable loss to Hill, who held Jackson's advanced line ;‡ but the Confederates concealed in the woods made no reply from artillery or infantry, until Meade arrived within point-blank range, when, suddenly opening, shell and canister were poured in from the long silent Confederate batteries. Yet this did not stay him ;

* That it may appear this is not a judgment penned *après coup*, I add the following, written by the author of this volume on the field : "It was with pain and alarm I found this morning a general want of confidence and gloomy forebodings among officers whose sound judgment I had learned to trust. The plan of attacking the rebel stronghold directly in front would, it was feared, prove a most hazardous enterprise. It was doubted that the co-operation of the right and left could be effective. 'The chess-board,' said Napoleon, in 1813, 'is dreadfully confused (*embrouillé*). There is but I that see through it.' We all felt the application of the first part of this saying to our case. But did we feel equally confident that there was in our case an 'I' that saw through it?"—W Swinton : Correspondence of N. Y. Times, Dec. 13, 1862.

† "The dense fog in the twilight concealed the enemy from view ; but his commands, 'Forward, guide centre, march!' were distinctly heard at different points near my right."—Longstreet : Report of Fredericksburg.

‡ Hill's Report : Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 464.

and the line advanced so boldly that the three Confederate batteries posted in advance of the railroad had to be hastily withdrawn.

The division of Hill which held Jackson's advanced line was thus disposed: the brigades of Archer, Lane, and Pender from right to left, with Gregg's in rear of the interval between Archer and Lane, and Thomas's in rear of that between Lane and Pender. Meade pushed forward his line impetuously, drove back Lane through the woods, and then, wedging in between Lane and the brigade on his right (Archer's) swept back the right flank of the one and the left flank of the other, capturing above two hundred prisoners and several standards, crossed the railroad, pushed up the crest, and reached Gregg's position on a new military road which Lee had made for the purpose of establishing direct connection between his two wings, and behind which Jackson's second line was posted.*

And now was seen the farcical character of Burnside's order of attack, by which a single division of five thousand men was assigned the work of fifty thousand. For, in assaults of this kind, there comes a moment of supreme importance, when the attacking column, having carried the enemy's first line, must assure its victory by a decisive blow, or be driven back by the hostile reserves and lose the fruit of all its toil. In this moment of intoxication and peril, the attacking line, confused and disintegrated by its advance, must be instantly supported by a fresh body, to consolidate and crown the victory, or else the enemy rallies and repels the victors.

Such was precisely the result that happened to Meade; for no sooner had he penetrated to the military road behind which the Confederate second line lay, than he was met by a fire for which he was not at all prepared. "The advancing

* The importance of this road has been greatly exaggerated by General Burnside: it was made merely for convenience of transportation, and was in no sense a key-point. Meade's attack was certainly made in a spirited manner, but its success has also been much over-estimated. The dispositions and force of the Confederates plainly show that nothing could have resulted even had Franklin's entire Grand Division been put in.

columns of the enemy," says General Hill,* "had encountered an obstacle in the military road which they little expected—Gregg's brigade of South Carolinians stood in the way." It appears that the advancing Federals were mistaken for a body of Confederate troops, and Gregg would not allow his men to open on them. When their true character was revealed, the brigade poured a withering fire into the faces of Meade's men; and, at that moment, Early's division—one of the two divisions of Jackson's second line—swept forward at the double-quick, and instantly turned the tide.† Exposed to fire on both flanks, Meade was forced to draw back, losing severely in the process; and the disaster would have been much greater had not supports been at hand. General Franklin, giving a liberal interpretation to Burnside's prescription of "one division at least" for the column of attack, had put in not only Meade's division but Gibbon's division and Doubleday's division, making the whole of Reynolds' corps. Doubleday, early in the attack, was turned off to the left to meet a menace by the enemy from that direction; but Gibbon advanced on the right of Meade, and, though he did not push on as far as the latter, he helped stem the hostile return, and assisted in the withdrawal of Meade's shattered line.‡ In addition to these two divisions, General Franklin ordered forward Birney's division of Stoneman's corps; and Birney arrived in such time that, when the troops of Meade and Gibbon were broken and flying in confusion, he presented a firm line that checked the Confederate pursuit.§ Meade's loss was very heavy—upwards

* Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 463.

† I learn from Colonel Marshall of the staff of General Lee, that General Gregg was killed on the military road while beating down the muskets of his men to prevent them firing into what he supposed was a body of Confederate troops.

‡ Meade: Report of Fredericksburg.

§ "As I advanced with my command to the crest of the hill, I found Meade's entire command—two divisions—in utter confusion, and flying in all directions without order from the field. At General Meade's request I tried to stop the rout with my command, and deployed two regiments to try to stop the fugitives; but it was useless—they went right through us. The enemy

of forty per cent. of his whole command; and the aggregate loss in Reynolds' corps was upwards of four thousand men.

At the time the attack on the left was fully developed, Sumner, on the right, was instructed to assail the height back of Fredericksburg. He also was ordered to make the attack with a single division, supported by another. Of the two corps composing Sumner's Grand Division, Couch's (Second) corps occupied the town, and Wilcox's (Ninth) held the interval between the left of Couch and the right of Franklin's command. The attack, therefore, fell to the lot of Couch; and, in accordance with instructions, he ordered forward French's division from the town at noon, to be followed and supported by Hancock's division.*

French, debouching from the town, moved out on the plank and telegraph roads, and, crossing the canal, found a rise of ground, under cover of which he deployed his troops in column of attack with brigade front.† Hancock's division followed and joined the advance of French.‡ Even while moving through the town, and marching by the flank, the troops were exposed to a very severe fire from the enemy's

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pursued them closely with great slaughter, as they fled from the field. The pursuit was so close that they came within fifty yards of my guns. I think it was Early's division," etc.—Testimony of General Birney: Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 705. General Meade's own report, as well as the Confederate reports, agree substantially with this account. See Hill's Report: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 462; Early's Report: Ibid., p. 469. Birney's statement, regarding the pursuing column being that of Early, is curiously corroborated by the official report of the latter, in which he states that his division "was compelled to fall back from the pursuit by a large column on its right flank, which proved to be *Birney's division*," etc.—Ibid., p. 470.

* Couch: Report of Fredericksburg.

† "General Kimball's brigade was in front, and by its subsequent conduct showed itself worthy to lead. It was followed in succession by the brigades of Colonel J. W Andrews, First Delaware, and Colonel Palmer, One Hundred and Eighth New York."—Couch: Report of Fredericksburg.

‡ Hancock's formation was the same as that of French: "brigade front with intervals of two hundred paces—the brigades in the order of Zook, Meagher, and Caldwell."—Hancock: Report of Fredericksburg.

batteries on the heights, against which it soon became impossible for the numerous Union artillery on the north bank of the Rappahannock to direct its fire, seeing that the missiles presently began to play havoc with the columns advancing over the plain.*

Longstreet, who held the position in the rear of Fredericksburg, forming the Confederate left, had taken up as his advance line the stone wall and rifle-trenches along the telegraph road, at the foot of Marye's Heights; and here he posted a brigade, afterwards re-enforced by another brigade.† But the whole plain was swept by a direct and converging fire from the numerous batteries on the semicircular crest above, and behind this lay the heavy Confederate reserves—unneeded, as it proved, for a few men were enough to do the bloody work. Under orders, nothing was left but to assail this position; so French first was thrown forward from the rise of ground, where he had formed, towards the foot of the heights. No sooner had this division burst out on the plain, than from the batteries above came a frightful fire—cross showers of shot and shell opening great gaps in the ranks; but "closing up," the ever-thinning lines pressed on, and had passed over a great part of the interval, when met by volleys of musketry at short range. They fell back, shattered and broken, with a loss of near half their number, amid shouts and yells from the enemy. Close behind French came up Hancock, and, being joined by such portions of French's command as still preserved their formation, his three brigades valiantly advanced under the same terrific fire, passed

* "Our artillery being in position, opened fire as soon as the masses became dense enough to warrant it. This fire was very destructive and demoralizing in its effects, and frequently made gaps in the enemy's ranks that could be seen at the distance of a mile."—Longstreet: Report of Fredericksburg.

† This position was first held by the brigade of R. R. Cobb, re-enforced in the afternoon by Kershaw's brigade, both of McLaws' division; and this small force, not exceeding seventeen hundred men, was all that was found necessary to repulse the numerous assaults made by the Union columns. —McLaws: Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. ii., p. 445.

the point French had reached, and like those that went before them, were forced back after little more than fifteen immortal minutes. Of the five thousand men Hancock led into action, more than two thousand fell in that charge; and it was found that the bravest of these had thrown up their hands and lay dead within five-and-twenty paces of the stone wall.* To relieve Hancock's and French's hard-pressed battalions, Howard's division now came up, and Sturgis' and Getty's divisions of the Ninth Corps advanced on Couch's left, and made several attacks in support of the brave troops of the Second Corps, who could not advance and would not retire; but all these could do was to hold a line well advanced on the plain under a continual murderous fire of artillery.

It is hardly to be supposed that General Burnside had contemplated the bloody sequence to which he was committing himself when first he ordered a division to assail the heights of Fredericksburg; but having failed in the first assault, and then in the second and third, there grew up in his mind something which those around him saw to be akin to desperation. Riding down from his headquarters† to the bank of the Rappahannock, he walked restlessly up and down, and gazing over at the heights across the river, exclaimed vehemently, "That crest must be carried to-night."‡ Already, however, every thing had been thrown in, except Hooker, and he was now ordered over the river.

Crossing with three of his divisions, Hooker went forward, reconnoitred the ground, consulted with those who had pre-

* Hancock took five thousand and six men into action, and his loss numbered two thousand and thirteen men, of whom one hundred and fifty-six were commissioned officers. The losses in some of the regiments were of a severity seldom seen in any battle, no matter how prolonged. "These were veteran regiments," says Hancock, "led by able and tried commanders."—Report of Fredericksburg.

† At the "Phillips House," a mile or so back from the river.

‡ These statements are made from the personal knowledge of the writer, in whose presence what is related occurred.

ceded him in action, saw that the case was hopeless, and went to beg Burnside to cease the attack. But Burnside insisted.* Couch had already thrown forward two batteries to within one hundred and fifty yards of the enemy's works, and endeavored to make a breach large enough for the entrance of a forlorn hope. After a vigorous cannonading, without any perceptible effect, Humphrey's division was formed in column of assault and ordered in. They were directed to make the assault with empty muskets, for there was no time there to load and fire.†

When the word was given, the men moved forward with great impetuosity, and advanced to nearly the same point Hancock had previously reached, close up to the stone wall: they advanced, in fact, over a space the traversing of which by any column would result in the destruction of half its numbers, when they were thrown swiftly back, leaving behind seventeen hundred of the four thousand that had gone forward.‡ What else might have followed in the commander's then mood of mind, it is impossible to say; but it was already late when Hooker's attack was begun, and night now dropped its curtain on a tragic scene, that might be fitly written only in the blood of the thousands of brave men who lay dead or moaning in agony worse than death on the plains of Fredericksburg.

So decisive was the action of the day that it is difficult to see how there could be any question touching the propriety of recrossing the Rappahannock. This course was earnestly urged by the chief commanders; but General Burnside judged

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* "I had the matter so much at heart that I put spurs to my horse, and rode over myself, and tried to dissuade General Burnside from making the attack. He insisted on its being done."—Hooker's testimony: Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 668.

† Hooker: Report of Fredericksburg.

‡ There is an almost savage irony in the manner in which General Hooker states the result of this attack. "Finding," says he, "*that I had lost as many men as my orders required me to lose,* I suspended the attack."—Report on the Conduct of the War, vol. i., p. 668.

otherwise, and determined to renew the assault on the morrow. The form this determination took was an evidence that he had lost that mental equipoise essential for a commander in the difficult situation in which he found himself. He resolved to form the Ninth Corps (which he had himself formerly commanded) in a column of attack by regiments, and lead it in person to the assault of the heights. All the preparations had been completed, and the attack was about to be made when, moved by the urgent entreaties of General Sumner, Burnside desisted from his purpose. The troops, however, still lay on their arms during Sunday, the 14th, and Monday, the 15th, of December, and, during the night, in the midst of a violent storm, the army was withdrawn to the north side of the Rappahannock. General Lee, unaware of the extent of the disaster the Union army had suffered, hourly expecting a renewal of the attack, and deeming it inexpedient to expose his troops to the fire of the batteries on the north bank, refrained during all this time from assuming the offensive,* and the withdrawal eluded his knowledge.

The loss on the Union side was twelve thousand three hundred and twenty-one, killed, wounded, and missing;† and on the part of the Confederates, it was five thousand three hundred and nine, killed, wounded, and missing.‡

There is little need for comment on this battle, or for other reflection than must spontaneously arise from the simple recital of its incidents. Such slaughters stand condemned in the common voice of mankind, which justly holds a com-

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* Lee: Report of Fredericksburg in Reports of the Army of Northern Virginia, vol. i., p. 43.

† Halleck: Report of Military Operations for 1863. General Halleck adds that a good many of the Union "missing" afterwards turned up.

‡ This aggregate I make up from the returns of the two corps of Lee's army —the First (Longstreet's) losing three thousand four hundred and fifteen, and the Second (Jackson's) one thousand eight hundred and ninety-four. Confederate Reports of Fredericksburg.

mander accountable for the useless sacrifice of human life. There are occasions when, as at Thermopylæ, a general is doomed to the tragic fate of immolating himself and his army; but such cases are rare and exceptional. It was not necessary for General Burnside, in a problem that admitted of very many solutions, to give to his army the character of a forlorn hope, in the assault of positions chosen, long-prepared, and impregnable, when he was free by manœuvres to select his own field of battle.

But even with the choice made of a direct attack of the fortified ridge, the plan of battle—if such fatuitous devisement as has seldom been seen can be called a *plan*—was exceedingly faulty. The conditions of attack and defence, and the nature of the position already set forth, dictated that the principal operation should be made from the left, where Franklin held one-half the army in hand. It is true that General Burnside, at a period subsequent to the battle, asserted that this was his purpose, and endeavored to fasten the responsibility of the disaster on General Franklin's alleged failure to make an adequate attack. But judging by the orders in which General Burnside's original intent and will are revealed, rather than by the inspirations of afterthought, it is manifest that, if he designed to make the main attack from the left, he at least made no provisions for giving effect to this intention. It would appear from his own statement, that he made his theory of battle to hinge on a contingency which he used no adequate means to bring about, unless it be thought that two isolated attacks on the fortified stronghold of the Confederates, made by a single division each, were adequate means to this end, and afforded a reasonable hope of carrying the position. That they were wholly inadequate was proved by the terrible experiences of the day, both on the right and the left; and the preliminary attacks having failed, as they must, I can only account for the tragic sequence, on the supposition I have already stated, that, distraught and demented with the failure, General Burnside continued in sheer despera-

tion to throw in division after division, to foredoomed destruction.

But while this may explain, it will not justify General Burnside's conduct. It would have been well for him had the failure of the first assaults, and the disclosures they made of the strength and position of the enemy, given him pause in their repetition. When General Warren at Mine Run, after viewing the enemy's line, which, like that at Fredericksburg, was manifestly impregnable, declined to throw away the lives that had been placed in his charge, preferring with a noble sense of honor and duty to sacrifice himself rather than his command, that instinct of right which is never absent in a generous people, appreciated the motive and applauded the act.

Had General Burnside followed the like prompting, he would have saved his name from association with a slaughter the most bloody and the most useless of the war.

III.

ABORTIVE MOVEMENTS ON THE RAPPAHANNOCK.

In tracing the development of military operations as they stand related to the army that was the agent of their execution, it is important to mark not only the army's condition of material strength and well-being, but those moral transformations with which, in so large a degree, its efficiency as a living organism is bound up.

Nothing is more difficult than to indicate, in precise terms, that blending of qualities, passions, prejudices, and illusions, that at any given time make up what is expressively called the *morale* of an army. Like the imponderable forces of physical philosophy, it is inappreciable by material weight and measure. Yet, if difficult of analysis, it does not fail to make itself felt as a palpable power; and the foremost master

of war attempted to convey his sense of its potency by the expression that in military affairs, "the moral is to the physical as three to one."

That the *morale* of the Army of the Potomac became seriously impaired after the disaster at Fredericksburg was only too manifest. Indeed it would be impossible to imagine a graver or gloomier, a more sombre or unmusical body of men than the Army of the Potomac a month after the battle. And as the days went by, despondency, discontent, and all evil inspirations, with their natural consequence, desertion, seemed to increase rather than to diminish, until, for the first time, the Army of the Potomac could be said to be really demoralized.*

The cause of all this could not be concealed; it was the lack of confidence in General Burnside—a sentiment that was universal throughout the army. Troops who have by experience learned what war is, become severe critics. It is a mistake to suppose that soldiers, and especially such soldiers as composed the American army, are lavish of their lives; they are chary of their lives, and are never what newspaper jargon constantly represented them to be—"eager for the fray." "The soldier," says Marmont, "acquires the faculty of discriminating how and when he will be able, by offering his life as a sacrifice, to make the best possible use of it." But when the time comes that he discovers in his commander that which will make this rich offering vain, from that moment begin to work those malign influences that disintegrate and destroy the *morale* of armies. General Burnside had brought his army to that unhappy pass that, with much regard for his person and character, it distrusted and feared his leadership; while the general officers had little belief in or respect for his

* The form which this demoralization assumed was aptly expressed by General Sumner, in his official testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War touching the battle and the condition of the army as a general spirit of "croaking." "It is difficult," said he, "to describe the state of the army in other way than by saying there is a great deal too much croaking—there is not sufficient confidence."

military plans. It is easy to see how fatal to the success of any military operations must have been this state of affairs; and this received striking illustration in the two attempted movements which fill up the remainder of General Burnside's career as commander of the Army of the Potomac. The first of these movements was undertaken a fortnight after the battle of Fredericksburg, towards the close of December. General Burnside had determined to cross the Rappahannock seven miles below Fredericksburg, with a view to turn the Confederate position, and in connection with this operation he resolved to send a cavalry expedition to the rear of Lee's army for the purpose of cutting the railroad communications of the Confederates. Now the raiding column had actually got under way, and the whole army was in readiness for an immediate move, when, on the 30th of December, General Burnside received a dispatch from President Lincoln instructing him not to enter on active operations without letting the President know of it. Surprised at this message, General Burnside recalled the cavalry expedition, and proceeded personally to Washington to ascertain the cause of the presidential prohibition. On seeing Mr. Lincoln, he was informed by him that certain general officers of the Army of the Potomac had come up to see him, and had represented that the army was on the eve of another movement; that all the preliminary arrangements were made, and that they, and every prominent officer in the army, were satisfied, if the movement was entered upon, it would result in disaster. In consequence of this condition of facts, the President, without prohibiting a move, judged that any large enterprise, at that time, would be injudicious; and General Burnside returned to his headquarters amazed at the revelation of the state of feeling in the army that was notorious to every one in it save the commander himself.

The position in which that officer now found himself was as false as it was humiliating; and was one that neither his own sense of honor, nor the Government's sense of the public welfare, should have permitted him to occupy. He had lost

the confidence of the army; he was unable to obtain the sanction of the general-in-chief to any proposition for a movement, and at the same time the country looked to him for action. In this unhappy situation, General Burnside's conduct was marked by a self-sacrificing and patriotic spirit; but he was utterly helpless to extricate himself from the coil that enveloped him. At length, as the be-all and the end-all of his hopes, he resolved to again try the fortune of battle, in the expectation that if successful it would rehabilitate him in the confidence of the army.

Unfortunately, success was already too necessary to him, and he made too much contingent upon it; for if success was needful as the means of recovering the confidence of the army, this very confidence was itself indispensable as a condition of success.

The point at which General Burnside resolved this time to essay the passage of the Rappahannock was Banks' Ford (not then fordable), about six miles above Fredericksburg. As, however, the enemy had a force in observation at all the practicable crossings of the Rappahannock, and as there was no possibility of making preparations for the passage at any one point with such secrecy that he should not become aware of it, it was resolved to make feints of crossing at several distinct points, both above and below Fredericksburg, and thus mask the real intent. Accordingly, new roads were cut through the woods to afford readier access to the fords, batteries were planted, rifle-trenches were formed, and cavalry demonstrations made along the line; and these manifestations were made impartially at a variety of points.

The weather and roads had been in excellent condition since the late battle, and on the 19th of January, 1863, the columns were put in motion with such secrecy as could be observed. The Grand Divisions of Franklin and Hooker ascended the river by parallel roads, and at night encamped in the woods at convenient distance from the fords. Couch's corps was moved below Fredericksburg to make demonstrations there, and the reserve corps under Sigel, which had

been united with the Army of the Potomac, was assigned the duty of guarding the line of the river and the communications of the army. Preparations for crossing were pushed on during the 20th, positions for artillery were selected, the guns were brought up, the pontons were within reach a short distance back from the river, and it was determined to make the passage on the following morning.

But during the night a terrible storm came on, and then each man felt that the move was ended. It was a wild Walpurgis night, such as Goëthe paints in the Faust. Yet there was brave work done during its hours, for the guns were hauled painfully up the heights and placed in their positions, and the pontons were drawn down nearer to the river. But it was already seen to be a hopeless task; for the clayey roads and fields, under the influence of the rain, had become bad beyond all former experience, and by daylight, when the boats should all have been on the banks ready to slide down into the water, but fifteen had been gotten up—not enough for one bridge, and five were wanted. Moreover, the night operations had not escaped the notice of the wary enemy, and by morning Lee had massed his army to meet the menaced crossing.

In this state of facts, when all the conditions on which it was expected to make a successful passage had been baulked, it would have been judicious in General Burnside to have promptly abandoned an operation that was now hopeless. But it was a characteristic of that general's mind (a characteristic that might be good or bad according to the direction it took), never to turn back when he had once put his hand to the plough; and it had already more than once been seen that the more hopeless the enterprise the greater his pertinacity. The night's rain had made deplorable havoc with the roads;* but herculean efforts

* The nature of the upper geologic deposits of this region affords unequalled elements for bad roads, for it is a soil out of which, when it rains, the bottom drops, and yet which is so tenacious that extrication from its clutch is next to impossible.

were made to bring pontons enough into position to build a bridge or two withal. Double and triple teams of horses and mules were harnessed to each boat; but it was in vain. Long stout ropes were then attached to the teams and a hundred and fifty men put to the task on each. The effort was but little more successful. Floundering through the mire for a few feet, the gang of Liliputians with their huge-ribbed Gulliver, were forced to give over, breathless. Night arrived, but the pontons could not be got up, and the enemy's pickets, discovering what was going on, jocularly shouted out their intention to "come over to-morrow and help build the bridges."

Morning dawned upon another day of rain and storm. The ground had gone from bad to worse, and now showed such a spectacle as might be presented by the elemental wrecks of another Deluge. An indescribable chaos of pontons, vehicles, and artillery encumbered all the roads—supply-wagons upset by the road-side, guns stalled in the mud, ammunition-trains mired by the way, and hundreds of horses and mules buried in the liquid muck. The army, in fact, was embargoed: it was no longer a question of how to go forward —it was a question of how to get back. The three-days' rations brought on the persons of the men were exhausted, and the supply-trains could not be moved up. To aid the return all the available force was put to work to corduroy the rotten roads. Next morning the army floundered and staggered back to the old camps, and so ended a movement that will always live in the recollection of the army as the "Mud March," and which remains a striking exemplification of the enormous difficulties incident to winter campaigning in Virginia.

The failure of this movement is sufficiently accounted for by those "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" the effect of which I have endeavored to portray; and the commander was certainly justified in suspending it, and recalling the army to its quarters, when the operation was seen to be hopeless. But General Burnside had fancied that he discovered another

and deeper cause, that, aside from the interference of the weather, would have baulked his projected campaign. This cause was a lack of confidence in him which he believed to be entertained by the leading officers of the army. Among these officers were Generals Franklin and Hooker, respectively commanders of Grand Divisions; and his first act on the return of the expedition was to prepare an order dismissing from the service of the United States Generals Hooker, Brooks, Cochrane, and Newton, and relieving from their commands in the Army of the Potomac, Generals Franklin, W F. Smith, Sturgis, Ferrero, and Colonel Taylor. Upon this order he resolved to make issue with the Government; and he immediately took this paper to Washington, demanding of the President its approval or the acceptance of his resignation. It was not asserted by General Burnside that the officers named had been guilty of any dereliction of duty, but simply that they lacked confidence in him as commander. This charge was probably true; but, as this issue involved the alternative of relieving nearly the whole body of the officers of the army or of relieving General Burnside himself, the President was compelled to refuse to sanction the order. General Burnside's resignation was accepted; and General Hooker, the officer whose name stood in the order as head and front of all the offending, and who, by its terms, was dismissed the service of the United States, was by the President placed in command in his stead.

General Burnside's career as head of the Army of the Potomac was as unfortunate as it was brief; and there is much in its circumstances and in his character to inspire a lenient judgment. His elevation to the command was unsought by him; for, with a good sense that was creditable to him, he knew and proclaimed his unfitness for the trust. It was right to try him, because it was impossible to tell whether his own gauge of his fitness was correct, or whether he wronged himself by a self-distrust that he might soon surmount. When, however, the trial had proved the absolute justness of

his measure of his own incapacity (and there can be no doubt that this was fully proved by the events of the battle of Fredericksburg), they must be held accountable for the consequences who retained him in a position which his own judgment, now fortified by the general verdict of the army, pronounced him unequal to fill. His retention after this, if there be any fidelity in the portrayal I have presented of the condition of the army, imperilled not only its efficiency but its existence. Desertions were going on at the rate of about two hundred a day, and the official rolls at the time he was relieved showed an absence from the Army of the Potomac of above eighty thousand men—"absent from causes unknown."*

I must here add that, while the superior officers had little respect for Burnside's military plans, they, nevertheless, did not allow their personal views to influence in the least their conduct. And it is the more important to state this conviction with emphasis, because it was commonly believed throughout the country that General Burnside, especially in the last operation attempted, failed to receive from his subordinates that hearty co-operation absolutely necessary to the success of any military enterprise.† It is not unlikely that General Burnside himself had the same suspicion; for, though he did not put it forth, yet it is hardly to be supposed that he would have demanded the dismissal of the officers named in his expurgatorial index on the mere ground of their abstract military views—for it is vain for any commander to expect to control these. General Burnside was, and would have been, obeyed in the execution of all his plans of operation;

* Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 112.

† It was one of the traits of the public temper during the war to be in constant suspicion of disaffection and disloyalty on the part of officers. Yet, if there be one characteristic of that period more remarkable than another, it is the absence of these things. And, in this regard, it strikingly contrasts with the common experience of nations at war; for even Napoleon, wielding imperial power, found it next to impossible to subordinate the individual wills of his lieutenants.

for there was that loyal alacrity among the officers that would have prompted this in any circumstances of personal relation. If, however, he was unable to command the homage of their intellectual approval, that was his own misfortune.*

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* It may be observed that many of the leading officers of the Army of the Potomac were not in favor of operating by the Fredericksburg line. The following correspondence betweeu Generals Franklin and Smith and President Lincoln has relation to this question. It is of great interest and has not before been published.

HEADQUARTERS LEFT GRAND DIVISION,
December 21, 1862.

TO THE PRESIDENT :

The undersigued, holding important commands in the Army of the Potomac, impressed with a belief that a plau of operations of this army may be devised which will be crowned with success, and that the plan of campaign which has already been commenced, cannot possibly be successful, present with diffidence the following views for consideration. Whether the plan proposed be adopted or not, they consider it their duty to present these views, thiuking that perhaps they may be suggestive to some other military mind in discussing plans for the future operations of our armies in the East.

I.—We believe that the plan of campaign already commenced will not be successful for the following reasons, viz.:

1. The distance from this point to Richmond is sixty-one miles.

It will be necessary to keep open our communications with Aquia Creek Landing from all points of this route. To effect this, the presence of large bodies of troops on the road will be necessary at many points. The result of making these detachments would be, that the enemy will attack them, interrupt the communications, and the army will be obliged to return to drive him away.

If the railroad be rebuilt as the army marches, it will be destroyed at important points by the enemy.

If we do not depend upon the railroad, but upon wagon transportation, the trains will be so enormous that a great deal of the strength of the army will be required to guard them, and the troops will be so separated by the trains, and the roads so blocked by them, that the advance and rear of the army could not be within supporting distance of each other.

2. It is in the power of the enemy at many points on this route to post himself strongly and defy us. The whole strength of our army may not be sufficient to drive him away; and even were he driven away at great sacrifice of blood on our part, the result would not be decisive. The losses to him in his strong positions would be comparatively slight, while ours will be enormous.

II.—In our opinion, any plan of campaign to be successful should possess the following requisites, viz.:

It was not possible to continue a condition of affairs that neutralized the best forces of the army, and the President wisely relieved General Burnside from a position deeply

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1. All of the troops available in the East should be massed.

2. They should approach as near to Richmond as possible without an engagement.

3. The line of communication should bo absolutely free from danger of interruption.

A campaign on the James River enables us to fulfil all these conditions more absolutely than any other, for,

1. On the James River our troops from both North and South can be concentrated more rapidly than they can be at any other point.

2. They can be brought to points within twenty miles of Richmond without the risk of an engagement.

3. The communication by the James River can be kept up by the assistance of the navy, without the slightest danger of interruption.

Some of the details of this plan are the following:

We premise that by concentrating our troops in the East, we will be able to raise two hundred and fifty thousand men.

Let them be landed on both sides of the James River as near Richmond as possible, one hundred and fifty thousand ou the north bank, and one hundred thousand or more on the south bank. All of them to carry three days' provisions on their persons and one hundred rounds of ammunition, without any other baggage than blankets, aud shelter-tents, and a pair of socks, and a pair of drawers. Let it be understood that every third day a corps or grand division is provisioned from the river. If this arrangement be practicable (and we think it is), we get rid of all baggage, provision, and infantry ammunition wagons, and the only vehicles will be the artillery and its ammunition wagons and the ambulances. The mobility of the army caused by carrying out these views will be more like that of an immense partisan corps thau a modern army.

The two armies marching up the banks may meet the enemy ou or near the river. By means of pontons kept afloat, and towed so as to be reached at any point, one army can in a few hours cross to assist the other. It is hardly supposable that the enemy can have force enough to withstand the shock of two such bodies.

If the enemy declines to fight on the river, the army on the south bank, or a portion of it, will take possession of the railroads running south from Richmond, while the remainder will proceed to the investment or attack upon Richmond, according to circumstances.

Whether the investment of Richmond leads to the destruction or capture of the enemy's army or not, it certainly will lead to the capturo of the rebel

humiliating to any man of honor. He lapsed from the greatness thrust upon him without forfeiting the respect of the

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capital, and the war will be on a better footing than it is now or has any present prospect of being.

The troops available for the movement are: the Army of the Potomac, the troops in Florida, South Carolina, and North Carolina, with the exception of those necessary to hold the places now occupied, the regiments now in process of organization, and those who are on extra duty and furlough, deserters, and stragglers.

The number of these last is enormous, and the most stringent measures must be taken to collect them—no excuse should be received for absence.

Some of the troops in Western Virginia might also be detached.

The transports should consist of ordinary steamers and large ferry-boats and barges. The ferry-boats may become of the greatest use in transporting troops across the James River.

With the details of the movement we do not trouble you. Should the general idea be adopted, these can be thoroughly digested and worked out by the generals and their staffs to whom the execution of the plan is committed.

Very respectfully, your obedient servants,

W B. FRANKLIN, Major-General.
W. F. SMITH, Major-General.

EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON, December 22, 1862.

MAJOR-GENERAL FRANKLIN AND MAJOR-GENERAL SMITH:

Yours of the 21st, suggesting a plan of operations for the Army of the Potomac, is received. I have hastily read the plan and shall yet try to give it more deliberate consideration, with the aid of military men. Meanwhile, let me say it seems to me to present the old questions of preference between the line of the Peninsula and the line you are now upon. The difficulties you point out pertaining to the Fredericksburg line are obvious and palpable. But now, as heretofore, if you go to the James River, a large part of the army must remain on or near the Fredericksburg line to protect Washington. It is the old difficulty.

When I saw General Franklin at Harrison's Landing on James River, last July, I cannot be mistaken in saying that he distinctly advised the bringing of the army away from there. Yours, very truly,

A. LINCOLN.

HEADQUARTERS LEFT GRAND DIVISION, December 26, 1862.

TO THE PRESIDENT:

I respectfully acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 22d inst. In arguing the propriety of a campaign on the James River, we supposed Washington to be garrisoned sufficiently, and the Potomac impassable except by bridges. The fortification of Harper's Ferry is another important requisite.

country for his zeal and patriotism; but he left behind him no illusions respecting his capacity for the command of an army.

These matters were considered as of course, and did not enter into our discussion of the two plans of campaign. I presume that you are right in supposing that I advised the withdrawal of the army from James River in July last. I think that under the same circumstances I would give the same advice. The army was debilitated by what it had already gone through, was in an unhealthy position, its sick list was enormous, and there was a prospect that we would have to remain in that position during the two worst months—August and September. The effect of this would have been to ruin the army in health. Circumstances are very different now. The army is in good health, and the best months of the year are before us.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

W B. FRANKLIN, Major-General.

VIII.

THE CHANCELLORSVILLE CAMPAIGN.

APRIL—MAY, 1863.

I.

THE ARMY UNDER HOOKER.

IN an army composed of citizens of a free country who have taken up arms from patriotic motives in a war they consider just, there is a perennial spring of moral renovation. Such armies have constantly exhibited an astonishing endurance, and, possessing a bond of cohesion superior to discipline, have shown their power to withstand shocks that would dislocate the structure of other military organizations.

The Army of the Potomac was of this kind. Driven hither and thither by continual buffets of fortune; losing its strength in unavailing efforts; changing its leaders, and yet finding no deliverance; misunderstood and unappreciated by the people whose battles it was fighting—it was not wonderful that it had lost in spirit. Yet, notwithstanding the untoward fortunes the Army of the Potomac had suffered, it could hardly be said to be really demoralized, for its heart was still in the war; it never failed to respond to any demand made upon it, and it was ever ready to renew its courage at the first ray of hope.

Such a day-spring came with the appointment of General Hooker to the chief command, and under his influence the tone of the army underwent a change that would appear astonishing, had not its elastic vitality been so often proved.

Hooker's measures of reform were judicious: he cut away the root of many evils; stopped desertion and its causes; did away with the nuisance of the "Grand Division" organization; infused vitality through the staff and administrative service; gave distinctive badges to the different corps;* instituted a system of furloughs; consolidated the cavalry under able leaders, and soon enabled it not only to stand upon an equality with, but to assert its superiority over, the Virginia horsemen of Stuart.†

These things proved General Hooker to be an able administrative officer, but they did not prove him to be a competent commander for a great army; and whatever anticipation might be formed touching this had to be drawn from his previous career as a corps-commander, in which he had won the reputation of being what is called a "dashing" officer, and earned the sobriquet of "Fighting Joe." He had gained a great popularity both in the army and throughout the country—a result to which his fine soldierly appearance and frank manners had much contributed; nor was this diminished by a

* The germ of the badge designation was the happy thought of General Kearney, who, at Fair Oaks, ordered the soldiers of his division to sew a piece of red flannel to their caps, so that he could recognize them in the tumult of battle. Hooker developed the idea into a system of immense utility, and henceforth the different corps and divisions could always be distinguished by the red, white, or blue trefoil, cross, lozenge, star, etc.

† The cavalry of the army had hitherto had no organization whatever as a *corps*. It was organized by brigades or divisions and scattered among the grand division commanders. From the time of its consolidation it was able to act in its legitimate line, and underwent a great improvement. On the 16th of March, Hooker sent out an expedition of six mounted regiments and a battery, under General Averill, to engage the Confederate cavalry on Lee's left, holding position near Kelly's Ford. Forcing the passage of the Rappahannock at Kelly's Ford, on the morning of the 17th, by a spirited dash, in which twenty-four of the enemy were captured, Averill pushed forward, driving the enemy before him for four miles south of the river, when he became engaged with the Confederate cavalry brigade of Fitz Hugh Lee. A very brilliant passage at arms here ensued, both sides repeatedly charging with the sabre. Nothing decisive resulted; but the Union cavalry were much encouraged by the exploit. Averill's loss was eighty-four; that of the Confederates one hundred and seventy.—Fitz Lee: Report of Kelleysville.

habit he had of self-assertion, which, however, proved little, since it may be either the manifestation of impotent conceit, or the proud utterance of conscious power. Hooker had shown himself a pitiless critic of his predecessors in command: he was now to be tried in an ordeal whence no man had yet escaped unscathed.

The new commander judiciously resolved to defer all grand military operations during the wet season, and the first three months after he assumed command were well spent in rehabilitating the army. The ranks were filled up by the return of absentees; the discipline and instruction of the troops were energetically continued, and the close of April found the Army of the Potomac in a high degree of efficiency in all arms.* It numbered one hundred and twenty thousand men† (infantry and artillery), with a body of twelve thousand well-equipped cavalry,‡ and a powerful artillery force of above four hundred guns.§ It was divided into seven corps—the First Corps under General Reynolds; the Second under General Couch; the Third under General Sickles; the Fifth under General Meade; the Sixth under General Sedgwick; the Eleventh under General Howard; and the Twelfth under General Slocum.‖

Lee's force was greatly inferior to that of his opponent; for

* It was not without truth that Hooker, at this time, in his grandiose style, named it "the finest army on the planet."

† This estimate is approximate; the data are as follows: The effective of the Fifth, Eleventh, and Twelfth corps was put by General Hooker, just before Chancellorsville, at forty-four thousand six hundred and sixty-one.—Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 120. The effective of the Sixth Corps is given by General Sedgwick (ibid., p. 95) as twenty-two thousand; and the effective of the First and Third corps, by the same authority, was thirty-five thousand. There remains the Second Corps, to which, if we give a minimum of eighteen thousand, there will result the aggregate of one hundred and nineteen thousand six hundred and sixty-one.

‡ Pleasonton: Official Returns, May 27th.

§ Hunt: Report of Artillery Operations.

‖ Generals Franklin and Sumner both retired from the Army of the Potomac after the change of commander. The latter was assigned to a command in the West, but died soon afterwards at his home in New York, lamented by the army and the country as the bravest of soldiers and purest of men.

relying on the strength of the line of the Rappahannock, he had, in February, detached two divisions, under Longstreet, to operate south of the James River,* and the remainder did not exceed an effective of fifty-five thousand men.† Hooker, therefore, was in a situation to attempt a bold enterprise, and the close of April found him ready to cross the Rappahannock and give battle.

II.

THE PASSAGE OF THE RAPPAHANNOCK.

The opposing armies had so long faced each other on the banks of the Rappahannock, that it may well be supposed there remained no point in the problem of the attack or defence of that line that had not been thoroughly considered. Since the battle of Fredericksburg and the subsequent attempts to pass the Rappahannock, Lee had made such dispositions as to guard all the available crossings of that stream. At the time the operations resulting in the battle of Chancellorsville began, he occupied in force the heights south of the Rappahannock from Skenker's Creek to United States Ford (a distance of about twenty-five miles), having continuous lines of infantry parapets throughout, and his troops so disposed as to be readily concentrated on any given point. Interspersed along these lines of intrenchments were battery-epaulements, advantageously located, for sweeping the hill-slopes and bottom-lands over which an assailing force would have to march—the crests of the main hills being from three-quarters of a mile to a mile and a half from the river's mar-

* "General Longstreet, with two divisions of his corps, was detached for service south of James River in February, and did not rejoin the army until after the battle of Chancellorsville."—Lee: Report of Chancellorsville, p. 5.

† The rolls of Lee's army showed, the 31st of March, 1863, a force of 60,298. But at the battle of Chancellorsville, the reports of the subordinates make it fully ten thousand less.

gin.* To gain the immediate banks opposite the centre of the enemy's line was, however, practicable in several places where the high ground on the north side approached the stream and enabled artillery to command it; but the prospect of then gaining a footing on the heights was, from past experience, hopeless. The Confederate right flank was so disposed that Lee was secure against attack in that direction; while above his left, at United States Ford, the junction of the Rapidan with the Rappahannock involved the passage of the former also in any attempt to turn that flank. Indeed, the execution of a movement to turn the Confederate left by the Union army, at such a distance from its base, and with heavy ponton and artillery trains, and in face of means of information such as Lee had at his command, seemed very unlikely, and he gave himself very little concern about it.

Difficult as was the problem in all its aspects, and debarred as Hooker was from making a direct attack, the most promising enterprise was nevertheless an operation against Lee's left. This, after much cogitation, Hooker resolved to execute, and he formed a very bold plan of operation. He determined to make his main movement against the enemy's left by a strong column, that by a wide detour up the Rappahannock to Kelly's Ford (twenty-seven miles above Fredericksburg) should pass round Lee's flank to Chancellorsville; while he resolved to mask this turning operation by forcing the Rappahannock near Fredericksburg with a considerable body, and ostentatiously threatening direct attack. He expected that the successful execution of the turning operation would have the effect to cause Lee to abandon his defences along the Rappahannock, when battle might be given with great advantage. In co-operation with this attack, he prepared a powerful cavalry column of ten thousand sabres, destined to operate simultaneously on Lee's railroad communication with Richmond.

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* Warren: Report of Engineer Operations connected with the Battle of Chancellorsville.

The turning column was composed of three corps—the Fifth (Meade), the Eleventh (Howard), and the Twelfth (Slocum). Marching on the morning of Monday, April 27, this force reached the vicinity of Kelly's Ford on the following day. During the night of the 28th, and next morning, the passage of the Rappahannock was made at Kelly's Ford on a canvas ponton-bridge, laid with but slight opposition from a small observing force; and the three corps, being divided into two columns, moving on parallel roads, took up the line of march towards Chancellorsville, to reach which it was necessary first to cross the Rapidan. The right column (Eleventh and Twelfth corps) struck the Rapidan at Germanna Ford,* the left column (Fifth Corps) at Ely's Ford. The stream proved to be barely fordable; but celerity of movement being an object of the first importance, it was immediately resolved to cross the troops by wading—an arduous and somewhat dangerous feat; for the stream is rapid, and even at the fords came up to the shoulder. The men, however, plunged in—the greater part stripping and carrying their clothes and cartridge-boxes on their bayonets—and amid shouts and scenes of Homeric laughter and gayety waded through the water, which reached to their arm-pits. Such as were carried away by the current were caught by a cavalry picket stationed below. After dark (the crossing being continued all night) huge bonfires were kindled, and by the aid of the lurid light thus cast over the wild scene, the troops filed over the river, and next morning all were across. The soldiers were in the highest spirits; for, acute judges of military movements as the rank and file always are, they knew that the march they had made was one of those pregnant marches that are in themselves victories: so they gayly headed towards Chancellorsville, which was the assigned point of concentration and which they reached in the afternoon of the 30th.

* At this ford, a party of Confederates were found engaged in rebuilding the bridge; but by a well-executed movement most of them were captured.

While the three corps, whose movements I have indicated, had passed far up the Rappahannock to Kelly's Ford, the Second Corps under General Couch had moved no further than United States Ford, where it was directed to remain on the north bank of the Rappahannock till the turning column sweeping down the south bank should have uncovered United States Ford, when it was to cross and move also to Chancellorsville. This object was, of course, accomplished the moment the Rapidan was crossed; and the same afternoon, Couch threw a ponton-bridge over the Rappahannock, and marched on Chancellorsville, at which point the four corps bivouacked that night (Thursday, April 30). The same night, General Hooker removed his headquarters to Chancellorsville.* He had secured a position which took in reverse Lee's entire fortified line, and he held in his hand a puissant force of fifty thousand men.

The remarkable success attending this movement, of which Lee did not become aware till the Rappahannock had been crossed, was the result of a secrecy and a celerity of march new in the Army of the Potomac. To have marched a column of fifty thousand men, laden with sixty pounds of baggage, and encumbered with artillery and trains, thirty-seven miles in two days; to have bridged and crossed two streams, guarded by a vigilant enemy, with the loss of half-a-dozen men, one wagon, and two mules, is an achievement which has few parallels, and which well deserves to rank with Prince Eugene's famous passage of the Adige.

In securing this result, important service was rendered by the skilful manner in which the flank march was masked by General Sedgwick, under whom had been placed for the execution of this duty the First Corps (Reynolds) and the Third Corps (Sickles), in addition to his own Sixth Corps. As soon as the column destined to make the turning movement was well under way, Sedgwick was ordered to cross the river in the vicinity of Fredericksburg for the purpose of making a

* This place consisted of a single large brick house.

direct demonstration. Accordingly, before dawn of the 29th, while the flanking force was passing the Rappahannock thirty miles above, pontoon-boats, borne noiselessly on men's shoulders, were launched three miles below the town, near the point at which Franklin had made his crossing on the occasion of the battle of Fredericksburg. In these a party passed to the south bank, capturing the small force in observation. Two bridges were then constructed, and two divisions thrown across. This menace immediately engaged the attention of the Confederates, who promptly began intrenching their entire front, as fearing a direct attack.* Demonstrations as though with that intent were made during the 29th and 30th, and as, by the night of the 30th, the feint had subserved its purpose, and a lodgment had been gained at Chancellorsville,

* There was much in what was visible to the Confederates of Sedgwick s operation to inspire them with the belief that Hooker was preparing his main attack at that point; and an *accidental* circumstance, the details of which are given below, tended greatly to confirm this impression. Being a spectator of Sedgwick's operations, I at the time interpreted certain movements as a *ruse de guerre*, designed to give the enemy an exaggerated notion of the strength of the force present at that point, whereas they were the necessary result of an entirely different operation; and I elaborated this point with some fulness in a letter on the battle of Chancellorsville in the New York Times. What was there stated has already passed into history; and Colonel MacDougall, an English military writer of repute, following that account (without credit given, however), thus writes:

"The four remaining divisions of these two corps [Sedgwick's and Reynolds'] remained on the north bank, and an ingenious *ruse* was practised to deceive the enemy into the belief that the greater part of the Northern army was there massed with the intention of crossing. It is to be noted that, from the configuration of the ground, the enemy could not see the bridges, neither could they see the four divisions on the north bank, which were behind the fringe of hills aforesaid. These troops were then put in motion, and, mounting the ridge, which, sloping both ways, served as a screen, marched along the top in full view of the Confederates, and then dipped down out of sight towards the bridges. Instead of crossing these, however, they turned back through a gully round the rear of the ridge, round again on the top, and again disappeared from sight to play the same game—just the same evolution as is practised by the 'brave army' on the stage of a theatre, and with the same intent of deceiving the spectators as to their numbers. The like stage effect was practised by the artillery and wagon-trains, until the Confederates had seen defile before

Sickles' corps was directed to join the force at that point—Sedgwick, with two corps, meanwhile remaining below to await developments on the right.

The success that had crowned these operations, which, as they were executed out of sight of the enemy, may be called the strategy of the movement, inspired the army with the highest hopes and greatly elated the commander. On reaching Chancellorsville on Thursday night, he issued an order to the troops, in which he announced that "the enemy must either ingloriously fly, or come out from behind his defences and give us battle on our own ground, where certain destruction awaits him." This boast, so much in the style of Hooker, was amplified by the whole tenor of his conversation. "The rebel army," said he, "is now the legitimate property of the Army of the Potomac. They may as well pack up their haversacks and make for Richmond; and I shall be after them," etc., etc.* And, indeed, there was much in the aspect of affairs to justify jubilant expectations; for, of the two lines

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them a force which they might well conclude to be the whole Northern army." —MacDougall: Modern Warfare and Modern Artillery, pp. 334, 335.

The following note from Major-General McMahon explains the real purpose of the operation misinterpreted by me:

NEW YORK, January, 1866.

MY DEAR SIR—The movement of troops under General Sedgwick, to which our conversation referred, was not for the purpose of deceiving the enemy into the belief that we were re-enforcing the left wing, although such probably was its effect.

The movements consisted of the withdrawal of Reynolds' corps from the lower crossing, which was effected without attracting the attention of the enemy; and the transfer of one division of the Sixth Corps from the upper to the lower bridges, to hold the position abandoned by the First Corps. The march of this division was so ordered that only its arrival at the lower bridges could be seen by the enemy. It was a necessary movement, made so by the departure of the First Corps for Chancellorsville, and not a stratagem. Of course, in this as in all similar movements, advantage was taken of the nature of the ground, to conceal our intention from the enemy as far as it was practicable.

Very respectfully, etc.,

M. T. MCMAHON,

Late Chief of Staff to Major-General Sedgwick.

W. SWINTON, Esq.

* These observations were made in presence of the writer.

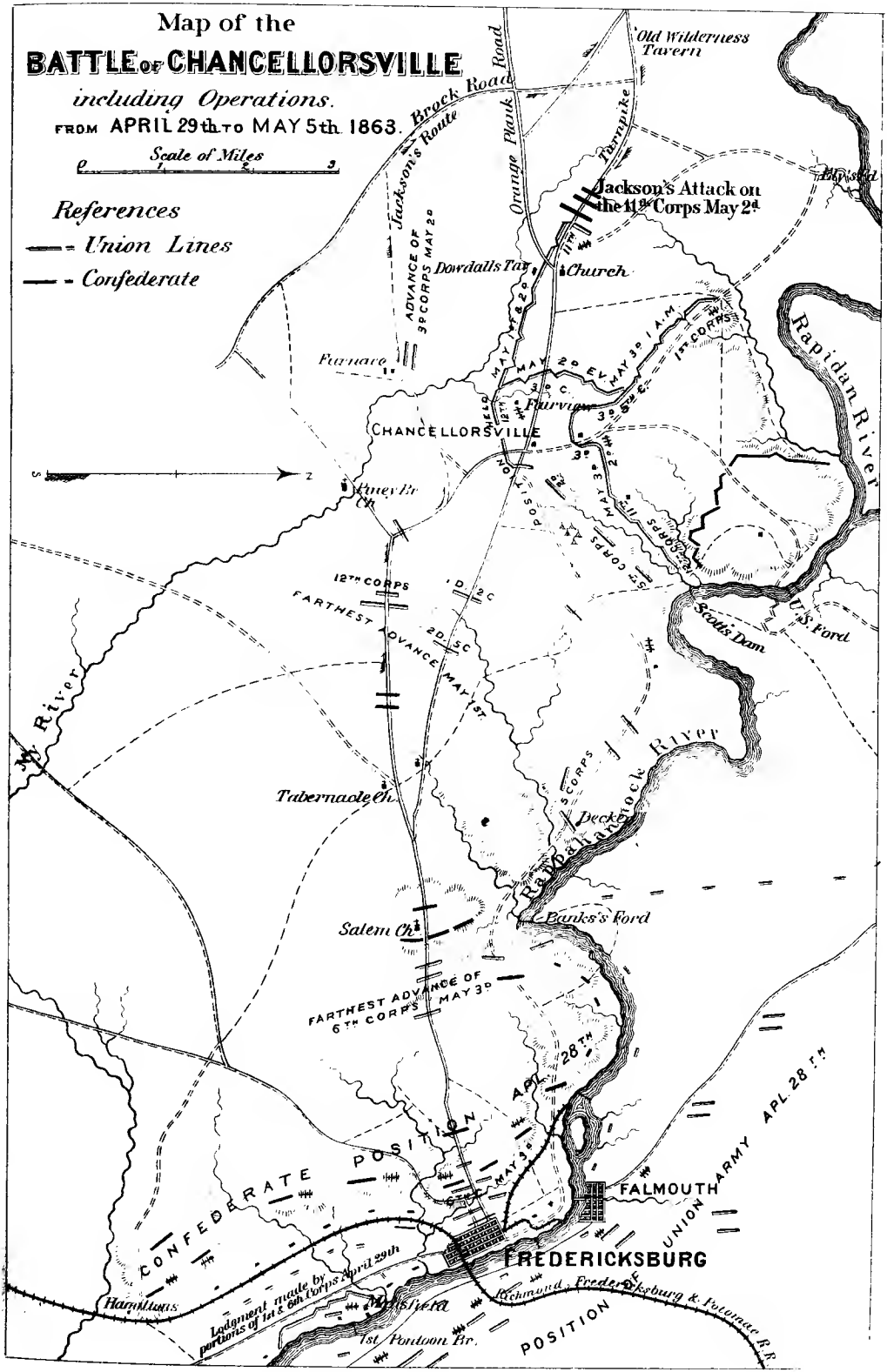
of retreat open to Lee. Hooker already laid hold of that by Gordonsville, and threatened that by Richmond. The former he could not take up; and, if he chose the latter, he would have Hooker with five corps on his flank, and Sedgwick with two corps pressing his rear. The bright promise of these initial operations was beclouded by but one fact—the cavalry column which was to cross the Rappahannock on the right of the infantry, and cut Lee's communications at the same time that the infantry was operating on his army, had been so delayed by the rise of the river that it did not cross the Rappahannock till the morning of the 29th, and had thus far made very insufficient progress.

But, instead of "ingloriously flying," Lee preferred to "come out of his defences" and give battle to Hooker; and, unhappily for that general, the circumstances under which he chose to receive battle, in place of insuring Lee's "certain destruction," as he had vaunted, resulted in the disastrous termination of a campaign thus brilliantly opened. Now, as these circumstances furnish the key to the right appreciation of the whole action, I shall, in the succeeding chapter, set them forth with some fulness of detail.

III.

AT CHANCELLORSVILLE—FRIDAY.

When, on Thursday night, Hooker had concentrated his four corps at Chancellorsville, the real character of the movement, which, up to that point, had been so admirably concealed from his antagonist, became fully disclosed. The Confederate leader saw that the demonstrations near Fredericksburg that had engaged his attention were but a mask, and that the turn of affairs called for the promptest action. Lee, with instant perception of the situation, now seized the masses of his force, and with the grasp of a Titan swung them into position as a giant might fling a mighty stone from


Map of the
BATTLE OF CHANCELLORSVILLE
including Operations.
FROM APRIL 29th TO MAY 5th 1863.
Scale of Miles
References
Union Lines
Confederate
Old Wilderness Tavern
Brock Road
Jackson's Route
Orange Plank Road
Turnpike
Jackson's Attack on the 11th Corps May 2d
Dowdalls Tav
Church
ADVANCE OF 3D CORPS MAY 2D
Furnace
Fairview
CHANCELLORSVILLE
Piney Br Ch
Rapidan River
12TH CORPS
FARTHEST ADVANCE MAY 1ST
Scotts Dam
U.S. Ford
Rappahannock River
Tabernacle Ch
Decker
Banks's Ford
Salem Ch
FARTHEST ADVANCE OF 6TH CORPS MAY 3D
CONFEDERATE POSITION APL 28TH
FALMOUTH
UNION ARMY APL 28TH
FREDERICKSBURG
Lodgment made by portions of 1st & 6th Corps April 29th
Hamiltons
Mansfield
1st Pontoon Br.
Richmond, Fredericksburg & Potomac R.R.
POSITION OF

a sling.* One division and one brigade—the division of Early and the brigade of Barksdale—were intrusted with the duty of holding the heights of Fredericksburg; and, at midnight of Thursday, Jackson and McLaws, and the rest of his divisions, recalled from Fredericksburg, and from far below Fredericksburg, were put in motion towards Chancellorsville to meet Hooker with a front of opposition, before he should be able, by advancing from Chancellorsville, to seize the direct Confederate communications with Richmond.

If the Confederate commander was able to effect this purpose, it was because the Union commander allowed him so to do; and this voluntary act on the part of the latter devolves upon him the responsibility for all the consequences flowing therefrom.

Chancellorsville, where Hooker had drawn up his forces, lies ten miles west and south of Fredericksburg, with which it is connected by two excellent roads—the one macadamized, the other planked. It stands in the midst of a region extending for several miles south of the Rapidan and westward as far as Mine Run, localized, in common parlance, as "the Wilderness"—a region covered with dense woods and thickets of black-jack oak and scrub-pines, and than which it is impossible to conceive a field more unfavorable for the movements of a grand army. But, advancing from Chancellorsville towards Fredericksburg, the country becomes more open and clear as you approach the latter place, and affords a fine field for the use of all arms.

Now, there is evidence that General Hooker did not originally design to allow himself to be shut up in this tangled thicket; and, on Friday morning, May 1st, he began to push forward his columns to gain the open country beyond the bounds of the Wilderness. The two roads running from Chancellorsville to

* "The enemy in our front [Sedgwick], near Fredericksburg, continued inactive; and it was now apparent that the main attack would be made upon our flank and rear. It was, therefore, determined to leave sufficient troops to hold our lines, and, with the main body of the army, to give battle to the approaching column."—Lee: Report of Chancellorsville, p. 7.

Fredericksburg (the plankroad on the right and the turnpike on the left) unite near Tabernacle Church, about midway between the former two places; and to the left of the turnpike there runs a river road leading along the Rappahannock to Banks' Ford. On the latter road two divisions of Meade's corps were pushed out, while on the turnpike Sykes' division of the same corps was thrown forward, and Slocum's corps was given the same direction on the plankroad. This was a movement to take up a line of battle about two and a half miles in front, preparatory to a simultaneous advance along the whole line, set down for two o'clock in the afternoon.* I shall trace briefly the experience of each column.

The left column, composed of the divisions of Griffin and Humphreys, moved out on the river road for five miles, and came within sight of Banks' Ford, without encountering any opposition.

The centre column, made up of the division of Sykes, supported by the division of Hancock, advanced on the turnpike, and on gaining the first of a series of ridges that cross the roads between Chancellorsville and Fredericksburg, somewhat over a mile in advance of the former place, the mounted men in front were met and driven in by the enemy. This small force resisted handsomely, riding up and firing almost in the faces of the Eleventh Virginia Infantry, which formed the enemy's advance. Thereupon, General Sykes moved forward in double-quick time, attacked the opposing force, and drove it back till, at noon, he had gained the position assigned him.†

The column on the right, composed of Slocum's entire corps, pushed out on the plankroad in the same general direction with the two other columns, and gained a point as far advanced as the others without meeting any opposition of moment.

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* Hooker's Circular Order, May 1: Report of the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 124.

† Warren: Report of Operations connected with the Chancellorsville Campaign.

The position secured by this movement of Friday forenoon was a ridge of some elevation, perfectly commanding Chancellorsville, out of the Wilderness, and giving the *débouché* into the open country in rear of Fredericksburg, while the left column had practically uncovered Banks' Ford, thus shortening by twelve miles the communication between the main force on the Chancellorsville line, and the two corps near Fredericksburg under Sedgwick. That a position affording such advantages—a position which Lee was then exerting all his efforts to secure—would be held at all hazards, and the possession insured by a general advance of the whole force, was what was naturally expected; yet, strange to say, just at this moment the three columns received orders from the commanding general to withdraw back to Chancellorsville. With mingled amazement and incredulity, this command was received by the officers, who sent to beg Hooker to allow the army to push on and hold the front thus gained.* It was urged in the warmest terms that the occupation of that fine position would uncover Banks' Ford, thus, as I have said, giving easy communication with Sedgwick; that it secured the dominating heights which, if not held, would instantly be seized to his great disadvantage by his antagonist; that it would take the army beyond the densely wooded region in which manœuvring was impossible, and that it would enable it to command the open country on the posterior slope of the Fredericksburg heights soon to be carried by Sedgwick. It was in vain that these considerations, whose supreme importance must be apparent from a

* "The ground on which I had posted Hancock in support of Sykes, was about one and a half miles from Chancellorsville, and commanded it. Upon receiving orders from General Hooker to come in, I sent Major Burt to him urging that, on account of the great advantages of that position, it should be held at all hazards. The reply was, to return at once. General Warren also went in person and urged the necessity of holding on."—Couch: Report of Chancellorsville. For confirmation of the same, see Warren: Report; Humphreys: Evidence on Chancellorsville; Report of the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p 63.

moment's glance at the topography of the region, were urged by his ablest advisers. Hooker had assumed the defensive and was waiting for the enemy to attack him "on ground of his own selection." From that moment he flung away the initiative with all its mighty gains and far-reaching hopes.

It is difficult to account for a line of action so faulty in a conjuncture of circumstances in which the fitting course was so manifestly marked out. Having studied the case at the time when a spectator of these events, I have returned to its examination in the light of the whole body of evidence since developed, and the riddle remains still unsolved. Till he met the enemy, Hooker showed a master-grasp of the elements of war, but the moment he confronted his antagonist, he seemed to suffer collapse of all his powers, and after this his conduct, with the exception of one or two momentary flashes of talent, was marked by an incomprehensible feebleness and faultiness; for in each crisis, his action was not only bad—it was, with a fatal infelicity, the worst that could have been adopted. It is probable that Hooker never expected that Lee would turn to meet him on that line, but that, disconcerted by the suddenness and success of the primal stroke, he would beat a hasty retreat southward towards Richmond. When, on the contrary, he found his antagonist making a rapid change of front and hurrying forward to accept the gage of battle in the Wilderness, the general whose first stride had been that of a giant, shrunk to the proportions of a dwarf.

The columns that had advanced so handsomely towards Fredericksburg returned to Chancellorsville; and having shown that this was a position relatively inferior to that which had been gained, it remains to add that it was absolutely a bad position. It had been taken up by tired troops, towards the close of the previous day, without any prospect of fighting a pitched battle upon it; it had several commanding positions in its front for the enemy to occupy and the thicket was so dense as not only to rule out of use the cavalry and artillery arms, but to make the movements of infantry very difficult, indeed almost impossible except by trailing

muskets. If it be added that any line drawn thereon would throw the right flank "in the air," while the woods would form a perfect screen for any hostile movements of the enemy, the military disadvantages of the locality will be fully appreciated.

The withdrawal of the column that had moved out on the right, and that which had moved out on the left, was made without difficulty, though the Confederates followed up with some show of force; but the retirement of Sykes, who had the centre, was an operation of more delicacy, for he had met a considerable body of the enemy, and had gained his position by a smart fight which cost him seventy men; and now the constantly arriving forces of the Confederates began to overlap both his flanks. Hancock's division, however, had moved up to Sykes' support, and, under cover of his line, Sykes was retired, and then Hancock also withdrew, and the enemy followed up, skirmishing, closing, and firing artillery from the crest, which Sykes had been ordered to abandon.*

The force that had been met in this series of simultaneous reconnoissances was the van of Jackson's command, which, on the disclosure to Lee of the real character of Hooker's move, had been recalled from the direction of Fredericksburg, and after marching all Thursday night and Friday morning, had just arrived on the ground. On finding the Union force returning from its advance, Lee pushed forward the heads of his columns rapidly and deployed in front of Hooker's position at Chancellorsville.

Hooker disposed his line of battle, running east and west, along the Fredericksburg and Orange Courthouse plankroad, on which, at the point of intersection of that road with the road from Fredericksburg to United States Ford, stands the Chancellor House—that is, Chancellorsville. Chancellorsville is placed in the middle of a clearing some three hundred yards in extent, and all around are the thickets of the Wilderness. The line of battle, as formed on Friday evening, was

* Hancock: Report of Chancellorsville.

about five miles in extent, stretching from a short distance east of Chancellorsville (where the left wing was somewhat refused), westward, in front of the Orange plankroad for about three miles, when the right flank bent sharply back in a defensive crotchet. Meade's corps (Fifth), with one division of Couch's (Second), formed the left; Slocum's corps (Twelfth), and one division of Sickles' (Third), the centre; and Howard's (Eleventh) the right. The other divisions were held in reserve. As General Hooker had concluded to fight a defensive battle, trees were felled in front of the line to form abatis, and rifle-pits were thrown up; and during the whole night the woods resounded with the strokes of a thousand Confederate axe-men engaged at the same work.

Next morning (Saturday, May 2d) Hooker stood on the defensive awaiting battle, and it seemed at first that his opponent had been beguiled into playing into his hands by making a direct attack; for the Confederates began early to make threatening demonstrations. First they felt Couch's line, but it proved to be well intrenched; then they assailed Slocum's front, moving down on the plankroad, and throwing shells into the clearing at the Chancellor House, where Hooker's headquarters were established and the wagons were parked;* afterwards they menaced the line still further to the right, and these operations they kept up at intervals during the whole day. But Lee had quite another object in view: he knew too well the risks of a direct attack with a force so inferior in numbers as he could dispose of; and while he engaged Hooker's attention with these front demonstrations, he was putting into execution a bold move such as he may have learned, in his military studies, from Frederick the Great. I shall in the following section indicate the nature of this operation, and detail the manner of its execution.

* "In the morning about six or seven, the enemy opened his artillery from our left on the open field in front of the Chancellorsville House, and drove out all our wagons and every thing that was loose into position."—Warren's Report.

IV.

JACKSON'S FLANK MARCH—SATURDAY.

False as was the situation in which the Union commander had placed his force in causing it to assume a defensive attitude at a moment when offensive action promised so much, Lee was, nevertheless, environed with peril. Strategically Hooker's position was a menacing one; tactically, it was unassailable by a front attack. In this dilemma Lee determined on a move which, considering the inferiority of his force, must be accounted astonishingly bold. He resolved by a flank march to assail Hooker's right and rear, with a view of doubling up that flank, taking his line in reverse, and seizing his communications with United States Ford.

This suggestion was, it is said, made to Lee in council during Friday night by Stonewall Jackson, who having, in his independent operations in the Valley, practised with great success the like manœuvre, now burned to execute, on a grander scale, one of these sudden and mortal blows. The plan, though full of risk, was immediately adopted by Lee, and, as a matter of course, its execution committed to his daring lieutenant, who was destined, in the climax of his power, to end his career in the world and the world's wars in this supreme exhibition of military genius.

The force with which Jackson was to make this movement consisted of his own three divisions, numbering about twenty-two thousand men. Of the Confederate force on the Chancellorsville line there then remained only the two divisions of McLaws and Anderson. These Lee retained in hand to hold Hooker in check.

No man knew better than Jackson the enormous importance of secrecy in the execution of such a design as that he took in hand on Saturday morning; and he had often repeated to his staff a saying, that was to him a fundamental axiom of war—"Mystery, mystery is the secret of success." Nothing

was omitted to secure this indispensable requisite in the task he had undertaken. Hooker's attention was to be engaged and the movement masked by energetic demonstrations of front attack to be made by Lee. Then, as the woods were thick and nearly impenetrable, Jackson hoped that, by taking a road some distance to the south of Chancellorsville, he would be able to pass unobserved; yet he took care, in addition, to throw out Fitz-Lee's brigade of cavalry on the right of his column to screen his perilous flank march across the whole of Hooker's front. Diverging westward from the Fredericksburg plankroad, Jackson pursued his march by a forest-path a couple of miles south of, and parallel with, the Orange plankroad, on which the Union force was planted; and, after passing the point known as the "Furnace," struck somewhat south by west into the Brock road, and thence northward to seize the Orange plankroad and turn Hooker's right flank.

This movement, skilfully masked as it was, was not made with such secrecy but that those who held the front of the Union line saw that *something* was going on. And more especially, in passing over a hill near the "Furnace," the column plainly disclosed itself to General Sickles, who held a position within sight of that point. Now, it happened that the road along which Jackson's column was filing there bends somewhat southward, so that, though the movement was discovered, it was misinterpreted as a *retreat* towards Richmond on the part of Lee; or, if the idea suggested itself that it might be a movement to turn the right, it was still judged, on the whole, to be a retreat. With the view of determining this, but yet more under the conviction that Lee was withdrawing, Sickles was sent out with two divisions to reconnoitre and attack him.* At about three o'clock in the afternoon, he ad-

* General Hooker, in his evidence on the battle of Chancellorsville, insinuates that he was all the time aware of the true character of Jackson's move, and that he made adequate preparations to meet a flank attack; but he, *at the time*, gave a very different view to General Sedgwick, to whom he wrote, on Saturday afternoon, as follows: "*We know the enemy is flying, trying to save his trains*, two of Sickles' divisions are among them."

vanced through the Wilderness for a mile and a half, or two miles, reached the road on which Jackson had moved, struck the rear of his column, and began to take prisoners. Elated by his success, the result of which he communicated to Hooker, General Sickles asked for re-enforcements; and, at his request, Pleasonton's cavalry and two brigades of infantry were sent him. As one of these brigades was taken from the Twelfth Corps, and the other from the Eleventh Corps,* holding the right of the general line, it is hardly to be supposed that Hooker would have made the detachment had he thought that flank was to be attacked.

While this manœuvre, under a false lead, was going on, Jackson was getting into position for his meditated blow. He had already reached the Orange plankroad, on which the Union line was drawn, and near the point at which it is crossed by the road from Germanna Ford; but, ascending a hill in the vicinity, he saw that disposition of the Union force by which its right flank was thrown sharply back in a crochet, extending northward and at right angles with the general line, which ran east and west. He, therefore, perceived that he would have to move further to his left, and further to the north, and, in order to strike the rear of Hooker's defensive position, would have to reach the old turnpike which runs parallel with and north of the plankroad.† Turning, therefore, after a rapid reconnoitring glance, to one of his aids, he instantly said, "Tell my column to cross that road"‡ (meaning, thereby, the plankroad, so as to move up and strike the old turnpike).

Reaching the turnpike about five o'clock, Jackson saw the Union line in reverse, and had only to advance in order to

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* Williamson's brigade, of Slocum's corps, and Barlow's brigade, of Howard's corps.—Sickles' Evidence: Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 5.

† The "old turnpike" may, roughly speaking, be said to be parallel with the plankroad, though it really joins near Dondall's tavern, about two and a half miles west of Chancellorsville.

‡ Cooke's Life of Stonewall Jackson, p. 251.

crown his perilous operation with complete success. The right of the Union line was, as before stated, held by the Eleventh Corps, under General Howard;* and, while the major part of this corps formed line of battle along the plank-road, and faced southward, the extreme right brigade† was "refused," and made to face westward, from which direction, towards six o'clock, Jackson burst out with resistless impetuosity. The dispositions to meet such an attack were utterly inadequate. The right brigade, after two or three hasty rounds, was forced back; and the next brigade to the left (McLean's), surprised on its flank, broke and fled. The route of retreat of these troops, and that of some artillery caissons that were at the same time galloped off the ground, was down the road on which the entire balance of the corps was posted; so that the confused mass overran the next division‡ to the left, which was compelled to give way before the enemy even reached its position.§ Bushbeck, holding with his brigade the extreme left of the Eleventh Corps, made a good fight, and only retired after both his flanks were turned, and then in good order.‖ But the result was, that the whole corps was

* Sigel's old corps; Howard had very recently taken command.

† Gilsa's brigade of Devens' division.

‡ Schurz's division.

§ Schimmelfennig's brigade, of Schurz's division, made a rapid change of front to the west, and resisted the advance of the enemy for an hour or upwards.

‖ The rout of the Eleventh Corps was bad enough without the exaggerated coloring in which it has been painted. Much was said in the newspaper accounts of the time regarding the "cowardly Dutchmen," and the fact that this corps was supposed to be made up of German elements was emphasized as lending additional opprobrium to the affair; yet, "of the eleven thousand five hundred men composing the Eleventh Corps, but four thousand five hundred were Germans."—The Eleventh Corps and the Battle of Chancellorsville. Pamphlet, New York, 1863.

The disposition of the corps to meet such an attack was excessively defective; and, in so far as the rout was owing to this circumstance, the author of this disposition must assume the responsibility. General Warren, in his evidence before the Congressional committee, propounds a theory of his own touching the disaster, which he attributes to the fact that the ambulances, ammunition-wagons, pack-mule train, and even beef-cattle, had actually been allowed to come

soon in utter rout. It was now seven o'clock, and growing dark; but Jackson had seized the breastworks, had taken the whole line in reverse, pushed forward to within half a mile of headquarters, and now proceeded to make preparations for following up his success by a blow that should be decisive.

The situation at this moment was extremely critical, for the Eleventh Corps having been brushed away, it was absolutely necessary to form a new line, and it was difficult to see whence the troops were to be drawn; for just at that moment Lee was making a vigorous front attack on Hooker's left and centre, formed by Couch's and Slocum's corps. Hancock's front especially was assailed with great impetuosity; but the attacking column was held in check in the most intrepid manner by Hancock's skirmish line under Colonel Miles.*

The open plain around Chancellorsville now presented such a spectacle as a simoom sweeping over the desert might make. Through the dusk of nightfall, a rushing whirlwind of men and artillery and wagons swept down the road, and

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up on the line of battle of the Eleventh Corps; and that, when the fighting began, all these, as a matter of course, ran away, greatly increasing the confusion.—Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 45.

* Amid much that is dastardly at Chancellorsville, the conduct of this young but gallant and skilful officer shines forth with a brilliant lustre. Being intrusted with the charge of the skirmish line covering Hancock's front, he so disposed his thin line, well intrenched, that the Confederates, though making repeated charges in columns, on Saturday and Sunday, were never able to reach Hancock s line of battle. "On the 2d of May," says Hancock, "the enemy frequently opened with artillery from the heights towards Fredericksburg, and from those on my right, and with infantry assaulted my advanced line of rifle-pits, but was always handsomely repulsed by the troops on duty there, consisting of the Fifty-seventh, Sixty-fourth, and Sixty-sixth New York Volunteers, and detachments from the Fifty-second New York, Second Delaware, and One Hundred and Forty-eighth Pennsylvania Volunteers, under Colonel N. A. Miles. During the sharp contest of that day, the enemy were never able to reach my line of battle, so strongly and successfully did Colonel Miles contest the ground."—Report of Chancellorsville. Colonel Miles was on Sunday morning wounded severely, and it was supposed fatally; but he afterwards recovered to share the glories of his corps to the close of the war, and he rose to the rank of major-general.

past headquarters, and on towards the fords of the Rappahannock; and it was in vain that the staff opposed their persons and drawn sabres to the panic-stricken fugitives. But it chanced that at this moment, General Pleasonton, who had gone out with his cavalry to re-enforce Sickles, was returning, and on learning the giving way of the right wing, he moved forward rapidly, sent his horsemen on the charge into the woods, and, bringing into position his own battery of horse artillery, and such guns, twenty-two in all, as he could collect, he poured double charges of canister into the advancing line. Hooker, too, flaming out with the old fire of battle, called for his own old division, the darling child of his creation, now under General Berry, and shouted to its commander: "Throw your men into the breach—receive the enemy on your bayonets—don't fire a shot—they can't see you!"* Berry's division, unaffected by the flying crowd streaming past it, hastened forward at the double-quick, in the most perfect order, with fixed bayonets, and took position on a crest at the western end of the clearing around Chancellorsville. Here General Warren with Berry's men, and the artillery of the Twelfth Corps, under Captain Best, and Hay's brigade of the Second Corps, formed a line to check the enemy in front, while Pleasonton and Sickles assailed his right flank; and fifty pieces of artillery, vomiting their missiles in wild curves of fire athwart the night-sky, poured swift destruction into the Confederate ranks. Thus the torrent was stemmed. But, more than all, an unseen hand had struck down the head and front of all this hostile menace. Jackson had received a mortal hurt.

On seeing the success that attended the first blow, Jackson, quick to perceive the immense consequences that might be drawn from this victory, proceeded to make dispositions to press on at once, extending his left so as to cut off Hooker from United States Ford. To relieve Rodes' division

* Correspondence of William Swinton in the New York Times, May 5 1863.

which had made the attack, he sent forward A. P. Hill's division; and being intensely anxious to learn the true position of his antagonist, he personally went forward through the dark woods, and with a portion of his staff rode out beyond his own lines to reconnoitre the ground, instructing the troops not to fire, "unless cavalry approached from the direction of the enemy."* Finishing his examination of the ground, he turned back with his staff to re-enter his own lines; but in the darkness, his troops, mistaking, as it is supposed, the party for a body of Federal cavalry on the charge, fired a volley which killed and wounded several of his staff, and pierced Jackson with three bullets. On being removed to the rear, his arm was amputated, and he seemed in the way of recovery, but pneumonia supervening, he expired at the end of a week. As the dying Napoleon is recorded to have murmured, "*Tête d'armée*," so Jackson, his unconscious mind still busy with the mighty blow he was executing when wounded, breathed out his life in the order, "A. P Hill, prepare for action!"†

Thus died Stonewall Jackson, the ablest of Lee's lieutenants. Jackson was essentially an executive officer, and in this sphere he was incomparable. Devoid of high mental parts, and destitute of that power of planning and combination, and of that calm, broad, military intellect, which distinguished General Lee, whom he regarded with a childlike reverence, and whose designs he loved to carry out, he had yet those elements of character that, above all else, *inspire* troops. A fanatic in religion, fully believing he was destined by Heaven to beat his enemy whenever he encountered him,

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* Life of General Jackson, by an Ex-Cadet (Richmond, 1864), p. 182. The same circumstance is detailed in Cooke: Life of Jackson, p. 253.

† Cooke: Life of Jackson, p. 270. Life of Jackson, by an Ex-Cadet, p. 190. During his illness, Jackson, speaking of the attack he had made, said with a glow of martial ardor: "If I had not been wounded, I would have cut the enemy off from the road to United States Ford; we would have had them entirely surrounded, and they would have been obliged to surrender or cut their way out—they had no other alternative."

he infused something of his own fervent faith into his men, and at the time of his death had trained a corps, whose attacks in column were unique and irresistible; and it was noticed that Lee ventured upon no strokes of audacity after Jackson had passed away.

The operation of Jackson, resulting in the doubling up of Hooker's right, made important changes in the line indispensable: so during the night a new front was formed on that flank, with Sickles and Berry. The Eleventh Corps was for the time out of the fight; but Reynolds' corps, which had up to this time been operating with Sedgwick on the left, below Fredericksburg, arrived that evening, and with its firm metal more than supplied the temporary loss. No idea was entertained of retreating; and if Lee did not retire, it was evident that the morrow must bring with it a terrible struggle. But before detailing the events of Sunday, as the action becomes then more complicated, and flames out in a double battle, it will be necessary to indicate what had been passing with that portion of the army under Sedgwick, and to point out the relations between these two parts of one and the same drama.

It was not until after Friday's developments near Chancellorsville, when the reconnoitring columns that went out towards Fredericksburg had met the enemy, and had been recalled, and Lee followed up and drew his lines around Chancellorsville, that Hooker became convinced that Lee was not minded to fall back. Seeing this, he, on Saturday morning, withdrew Reynolds' corps also from the force under Sedgwick, and it reached Chancellorsville late that night. This left Sedgwick with only his own (Sixth) corps; but it was a powerful corps, numbering some twenty-two thousand men.*

Now, it is a question which will present itself to the military

* In addition to this, Gibbon's division of Couch's corps held Falmouth, and observed the river and the north side of Banks' Ford.

student, whether it would not have been better, the moment a lodgment was gained at Chancellorsville, on Thursday, to have at once brought the three corps under Sedgwick up to that point and united the army. Their presence below Fredericksburg, while the turning operation was in execution, was correct; but after that purpose was accomplished, the three corps near Fredericksburg, and the four corps at Chancellorsville, presented the character of a divided army, separated from each other by twenty miles, a river to be twice passed, and the enemy between the two parts. And especially when Friday's developments had proved that Lee would not retreat but offer battle at Chancellorsville was such a junction desirable. Nor was this necessity lessened, but rather greatly heightened by the fact that Hooker's order to withdraw from the advanced position gained on Friday, by forfeiting possession of Banks' Ford (the tenure of which would have practically brought the two parts of his army together), definitively severed Sedgwick from the force at Chancellorsville, and made a junction possible only on one of two conditions: firstly, a detour by the north bank of the Rappahannock, making the passage at United States Ford—but this was one entire day's march; secondly, by a direct march of Sedgwick from Fredericksburg to Chancellorsville, with Lee interposing between him and Hooker.

Now when, on Saturday night, the disruption of the right wing had given a blow to all his hopes, and seriously imperilled his army, Hooker resolved to adopt the latter course, and with a view to relieve the pressure that was upon him, sent, late at night, orders to Sedgwick to put himself in motion immediately, occupy Fredericksburg, seize its heights, gain the plankroad from that place to Chancellorsville, and move out to join the main body, destroying any force he might meet, and reaching his assigned position by daylight the next morning. This was precisely one of those movements which, according as they are wrought out, may be either the height of wisdom or the height of folly. Its successful accomplishment certainly promised very brilliant results.

It is easy to see how seriously Lee's safety would be compromised, if, while engaged with Hooker in front, he should suddenly find a powerful force assailing his rear, and grasping already his direct line of communications with Richmond. But if, on the other hand, Lee should be able by any slackness on the part of his opponent, to engage him in front with a part of his force, while he should turn round swiftly to assail the isolated moving column, it is obvious that he would be able to repulse or destroy that column, and then, by a vigorous return, meet or attack his antagonist's main body. For the successful execution of this plan not only was Sedgwick bound to the most energetic action, but Hooker also was engaged by every consideration of honor and duty to so act as to make the dangerous task he had assigned to Sedgwick possible. And now premising that Sedgwick, immediately on receipt of the order at eleven o'clock of Saturday night, put his force in motion from its position three miles below Fredericksburg and moved forward to effect a junction with the main body, I shall return to the recital of events at Chancellorsville at the time the action burst forth anew on Sunday morning.

V

SUNDAY'S ACTION AT CHANCELLORSVILLE

When, some hours before dawn of Sunday, Lee received word of the wounding of Jackson, the messenger who conveyed to him the tidings, added that it had been Jackson's intent, had he been spared, "to have pressed the enemy on Sunday." "These people shall be pressed to-day!" exclaimed Lee, with deep emotion.*

Stuart had succeeded for the time being to Jackson's command, and forming the corps in three lines, he advanced it at

* Life of Jackson, by an Ex-Cadet, p. 185.

daylight to the attack, with the battle-cry, "*Charge, and remember Jackson!*"* Swinging round his right so as to bring it perpendicular with the plankroad, he seized the crest which had the day before been occupied by the left of the Eleventh Corps, got thirty pieces of artillery rapidly into position thereon, and opened a heavy fire on the plain around the Chancellor House."†

The attitude of Hooker had not now even the pretence of an offensive character. The line he held, however, on Sunday morning, still covered the angle of roads at the Chancellorsville House. Sickles' corps, and Berry's division of Slocum's corps, and French's division of Couch's corps formed the right, and faced westward to meet Stuart's attack, while the rest of Slocum's corps and Hancock's division of Couch's corps formed the centre and left and covered the two roads from Chancellorsville to Fredericksburg to meet any assault from the remainder of Lee's army, while part of Hancock was thrown back, facing eastward, so as to guard the communications with United States Ford. The corps-commanders saw that it was only a question of saving what they could of the army's honor, for the army was without a head.‡ During the night the engineers had traced out a new line three-quarters of a mile to the rear of Chancellorsville,

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* Life of Jackson, by an Ex-Cadet, p. 187.

† Stuart's Report of the Battle of Chancellorsville, p. 18. "In course of the morning, the corps on our right was pushed in, enabling the enemy to concentrate his artillery fire on Chancellorsville with effect."—Couch's Report. This swinging round of Stuart's right was made under the following circumstances. It will be remembered that Sickles, from the movement he had made on Saturday afternoon to attack the rear of Jackson's corps, reached a position on the right flank of that corps; but a little before daybreak, Sickles was ordered to retire from that position to his place in the new line. It was when the withdrawal had been nearly accomplished that Stuart advanced his right, and in so doing engaged Sickles' rear, consisting of the brigade of Graham, who manœuvred his command with address and made good his escape.—

‡ When Slocum, after fighting long and hard, sent to inquire if other movements were being made that might relieve him, or if he might expect reenforcements and ammunition, Hooker replied, that *he could not make soldiers or ammunition.* This, too, when two corps lay idle!

towards the river, and covering the roads to United States and Ely's fords. To this line Hooker had resolved to retire, and he seemed to be incapable of other resolve.

Sickles and Berry and French made good fight at their position, receiving Stuart's impetuous attacks; but the result was that, after a severe struggle, Sickles was forced from his front line. Carroll, with a few regiments of French's division, assailed Stuart's left flank, and threw it into much confusion, capturing several hundred prisoners,* but that flank being re-enforced, Stuart pressed back French in turn, and his right renewed the attack on Sickles.†

While Stuart was thus bearing down on the right wing, Lee with his remaining divisions attacked the centre and left under Slocum and Hancock. He threw forward Anderson's division on the plankroad connecting Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville to attack Slocum, and assailed Hancock with McLaws' division. The latter was repulsed in the most brilliant manner by the skirmish line of Hancock's division; but Anderson pressed hard on Slocum, and throwing round his left, succeeded in making a connection with Stuart by a thin line. This done, Lee advanced his whole line, when Sickles and Slocum were forced back. The line melted away and the whole front appeared to pass out, and Hancock, with a portion of Slocum's corps under General Geary, alone held the extreme point of the line on the side of the Chancellorsville House towards the enemy.‡ Drawing back

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* "French drove the enemy, taking about three hundred prisoners and recapturing a regiment of one of the corps in the hands of the rebels."—Couch: Report of Chancellorsville.

† "In the mean time the enemy was pressing our left with infantry, and all the re-enforcements I could obtain were sent there."—Stuart: Report of Chancellorsville, p. 18.

‡ Hancock's testimony: Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 67. Geary, however, went out some time before Hancock, who remained till the last. It is proper to state that Sickles' ammunition had become exhausted, and no re-enforcements were sent him, notwithstanding that Meade and Reynolds were both disengaged. Sickles, with the bayonet alone, repelled several successive assaults, and Mott's New Jersey brigade of

to the Chancellor House, a struggle was made for a time at the angle of roads; but the line soon began to waver. Detecting this, the Confederates sprang forward, and at ten o'clock seized Chancellorsville.*

A short time before the action thus culminated, General Hooker was thrown down by the concussion of a shot that struck one of the pillars of the Chancellor House, on the balcony of which he was standing. This prostrated him for a brief period, and he instructed General Couch to superintend the withdrawal of the troops to the new line in rear, which had been prepared and fortified during the previous night. This line had the form of a redan thrown forward in the angle between the Rapidan and the Rappahannock—the right flank resting on the former, and the left on the latter stream. The corps of Meade and Reynolds, which had held position on the right in reserve, and had, strange to say, not been called into action during the terrible struggle of the morning, were formed on the new line, where they were joined by the rest of the army falling back from Chancellorsville. Lee, gathering up his forces, was about to renew the attack on this fresh position, when his upraised arm was suddenly arrested by tidings of great purport from Fredericksburg.†

Sickles' corps alone captured seven or eight colors from the enemy's second line and took several hundred prisoners.

* "Artillery was pushed forward to the crest, sharp-shooters were posted in a house in advance, and in a few minutes Chancellorsville was ours (ten o'clock, A. M.)"—Stuart: Report, p. 18. Lee states the same time.—Report, p. 10. Most of the Union reports make it eleven o'clock.

† "Our preparations were just completed, when further operations were arrested by intelligence received from Fredericksburg."—Lee's Report, p. 10

VI.

THE STORMING OF THE HEIGHTS.

It was towards midnight of Saturday when Sedgwick received his orders to move through Fredericksburg and proceed towards Chancellorsville to unite with the main body. This command found him holding his position on the south bank of the Rappahannock, three miles below Fredericksburg. He immediately put his corps in motion by the flank, and proceeded to the town, skirmishing sharply with the enemy all the way up—the Confederate force falling back slowly.* Some hours before dawn of Sunday, Sedgwick occupied Fredericksburg, but a small force thrown forward before daylight to seize the enemy's works behind the town was immediately repulsed. Gibbon's division of Couch's corps, which had been holding Falmouth, then crossed to join him.

For the defence of Fredericksburg, General Lee had left behind Early's division of four brigades and Barksdale's brigade of McLaws' division.† Barksdale occupied the heights immediately in rear of the town, including Marye's Hill and the stone wall at its base, famous in the story of Burnside's attack. Early's own division held the Confederate right below the town. Three companies of the Washington Artillery occupied the crest, and as soon as Sedgwick's movement was disclosed, on Sunday morning, Early sent Hays' brigade to re-enforce Barksdale. As it had required scarcely more than this force to repulse Burnside's successive columns of attack on the 13th of December, Barksdale had probably little doubt of his ability to give a like reception to those now threatening assault.

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* Sedgwick: Report of Fredericksburg Heights.

† In addition to this force the Confederate General Wilcox, who, with his brigade, had been holding position at Banks' Ford, moved up to join Barksdale, but arrived too late to take part in the action, though he played a part in the afterpiece.

Sedgwick's first efforts were of a tentative nature. Howe's division, occupying the left of his line, made an effort against the Confederate right with a view to turn the heights. It had no serious character, however, and was not successful.* Gibbon's division, on the right of Sedgwick, then essayed to move round the left of the Confederate position; but this was foiled by the canal covering that entire flank. A partial attack in front was not more successful. Every action has these periods of prelude, from which the proper course at length discloses itself. That which now presented itself as best suited to the circumstances, and promising the best results, was to form a powerful assaulting column and carry Marye's Heights by storm.

The preliminary endeavors and the preparations for attack had consumed considerable time, and it was towards eleven o'clock when it began. Two columns were formed from Newton's division—the right column of four regiments, and the left column of two regiments—and on the left of this a line of battle of four regiments was thrown out. The columns moved on the plankroad and to the right of it directly up the heights. The line of battle advanced on the left of the road on the double-quick against the rifle-pits, neither halting nor firing a shot until they had driven the enemy from their lower line of works along the stone wall at the base of Marye's Hill. In the mean time the storming parties had rushed forward to the crest and carried the works in rear of the rifle-pits, capturing the guns and many hundred prisoners.† The assault was executed with great gallantry, under a very severe fire that cost Sedgwick a thousand men; and the Confederates made a savage hand-to-hand fight on the crest and over the guns.

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* "The enemy made a demonstration against the extreme right, which was easily repulsed by General Early."—Lee: Report of Chancellorsville, p. 11.

† "A large portion of the Eighteenth Mississippi Regiment and a part of the Twenty-first were taken prisoners, and a company of the Washington Artillery, with its guns, were captured."—Report of General Early, p. 34. The Sixth Maine, of the light brigade under Colonel Burnham, was the first to plant its colors on the works.

As, simultaneous with these events, Howe's division on the left carried the crest below Fredericksburg, capturing a number of prisoners and five guns, the whole ridge was now in Sedgwick's possession. Early's troops retreated southward over the telegraph road, leaving the plankroad from Fredericksburg to Chancellorsville open to an advance of Sedgwick. This the latter proceeded with all haste to set on foot.

Such was the startling intelligence that, in the climax of his triumph, reached General Lee, who suddenly found himself summoned to meet this new and unexpected menace. The course adopted by Lee in this emergency was precisely the course prescribed by the highest principles of war—the principles on which Cæsar, and Gustavus, and Frederick fought battles; but it was a course very bold—unusually bold for the cautious and methodical mind of the Confederate commander. Relying on the repulse Hooker had received to hold him inactive, Lee instantly countermarched from Hooker's front a force sufficient, in conjunction with the troops under Early, to check or destroy Sedgwick. Wilcox's brigade, which had been held at Banks' Ford, was already in position to meet him; and in addition, Lee forwarded the brigade of Mahone of Anderson's division and the brigades of Kershaw, Wofford, and Semmes under General McLaws.* These, with the five brigades of Early, who was in position to place himself on Sedgwick's rear, he judged adequate to the work. While, therefore, this force was countermarching from Chancellorsville towards Fredericksburg, Sedgwick was advancing from Fredericksburg towards Chancellorsville; and it happened that the heads of the columns came together just about midway—at Salem Heights, near the junction of the plankroad and the turnpike. It was now towards four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the Confederate brigades, under Wilcox, already held the crest at Salem Chapel, and McLaws was proceeding to form his brigades on his right and left; but Sedgwick threw forward Brooks' division, sup-

* Lee: Report of Chancellorsville, p. 12.

porting it with Newton's division on the right, and, advancing, gained the crest after a sharp conflict.* This was a momentary triumph, for he was soon pushed slowly back through the woods. The falling back was covered, and the advance of the enemy checked by the excellent firing of the batteries under Colonel Tompkins.† Sedgwick, in fact, was checked. His loss was severe, and with that suffered in carrying the heights of Fredericksburg, brought the total up to five thousand men.‡ Such was the situation in which night found this column.

VII.

THE COUP DE GRACE.

Monday, May 4th, found both armies, and the opposing halves of each army, in a curious dead-lock. Hooker had assumed a strictly defensive attitude in his new line. Lee felt unable to attack with less than his whole force, which could not be concentrated until he was relieved of the danger that menaced his rear in the person of Sedgwick.§ Sedgwick, on the other hand, while able to hold his own, was unable to advance in face of the opposition he encountered. This was now not lessened but rather increased, for General Early

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* Sedgwick's Report.

† "The advance of the enemy was checked by the splendid firing of our batteries—Williston's, Rigby's, and Parsons'."—Sedgwick's Report. The Confederate General McLaws testifies to the excellence of the artillery service: "The batteries of the enemy were admirably served, and played over the whole ground."—Report of the Battle of Chancellorsville, p. 30.

‡ "My strength yesterday was twenty-two thousand men; I do not know my losses, but they were large—probably five thousand men."—Dispatch from Sedgwick to Hooker, May 4th: Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 109. The precise loss was four thousand nine hundred and twenty-five killed, wounded, and missing.—Sedgwick's Report.

§ "In the mean time the enemy had so strengthened his position near Chancellorsville, that it was deemed inexpedient to assail it with less than our whole force, which could not be concentrated until we were relieved from the danger that menaced our rear."—Lee: Report, p. 12.

on Monday morning retook the heights of Fredericksburg, thus cutting off Sedgwick from communication with that place, and enveloping him on three sides.

To cut this knot, Lee resolved to further re-enforce the troops opposed to Sedgwick and drive him across the Rappahannock, thus eliminating from the problem one important factor. Accordingly, on Monday morning Anderson was directed to proceed with his remaining three brigades to join McLaws.* Reaching Salem Heights about noon, he threw his force around on Sedgwick's left, with the view of cutting his command off from the river. The Confederates, however, met considerable delay in getting into position, and the attack was not begun till six o'clock, when it was made with great impetuosity—Sedgwick resisting with the utmost stubbornness, but forced to yield ground, especially on the left. Happily, darkness soon ensued to prevent the enemy's following up his advantage, and, under cover of night, Sedgwick safely withdrew his corps across the Rappahannock at Banks' Ford, where a ponton-bridge had been laid the day before.

Thus it was that Lee on Tuesday morning (May 5th) saw himself relieved from this menace in his rear; and having now but a single foe to cope with, he promptly recalled the divisions of McLaws and Anderson, united them with his main force at Chancellorsville, and resolved to give the remaining section of the Union army the *coup de grâce*. Preparations were made during the afternoon and evening to assail Hooker's position at daylight the following morning (Wednesday, May 6th). When daybreak, however, came, and the Confederate skirmishers advanced, it was found that the army had, during the night, withdrawn across the Rappahannock.

Hooker had determined, on Monday night, to recross the river; but when the question was submitted to the judgment of his corps-commanders, it was found that a majority of those present were in favor of an advance rather than a withdrawal. Hooker, however, had lost all stomach for fight.

* Lee: Report of Chancellorsville, p. 12.

Accordingly on Tuesday, the engineers were instructed to prepare a new line near the river to cover the crossing, and for this purpose they constructed a continuous cover and abatis, from the Rappahannock at Scott's Dam around to the mouth of Hunting Creek on the Rapidan, a distance of three miles. During the afternoon a heavy rain set in which lasted till late at night.

The movement to recross was begun by the artillery at dark of Tuesday, and was suddenly interrupted by a rise in the Rappahannock so great as to submerge the banks at the end of the bridges, which the current threatened to sweep away—a consummation most devoutly wished by many of the leading officers of the army, who were bitterly opposed to recrossing the river. But fate willed otherwise, and in the midst of a night as gloomy as the mood of the army, the troops filed across to the north bank.

The losses in the battle of Chancellorsville can be stated with accuracy On the side of the Confederates, they made an aggregate of ten thousand two hundred and eighty-one.* On the Union side, they were seventeen thousand one hundred and ninety-seven† killed, wounded, and missing. The army left behind its killed, its wounded, fourteen pieces of artillery, and twenty thousand stand of arms.

It remains now to glance a moment at the operations of the cavalry column under Stoneman. As this was a powerful corps, numbering some ten thousand sabres, and as its movement was intended to precede by a fortnight the commencement of operations by the army, very important results were expected from it. But the cavalry was delayed a long time by the swollen condition of the upper Rappahannock, so that it did not cross till the time the infantry made the passage, April 29. Hooker then divided the command into two

* Lee: Report of Chancellorsville, p. 131.

† Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 143. Of this number Lee claims five thousand prisoners, besides the wounded. He also claims the prize of seventeen standards, nineteen thousand and five hundred stand of arms, and much ammunition.—Lee: Report of Chancellorsville, p. 15.

columns, sending one, under General Averill, to move to Louisa Courthouse, threaten Gordonsville, and engage the Confederate mounted force, while the other, under General Buford, should break up the Richmond and Fredericksburg Railroad, destroying its bridges, etc.

The only mounted force the Confederates could oppose to these columns was a small brigade of two regiments under General W H. F. Lee.* That officer fell back before the Union cavalry, which advanced on Louisa Courthouse, and proceeded to destroy the Virginia Central road. Stoneman divided Buford's force into six bodies, throwing them out in all directions; but the important line of communications by the Fredericksburg and Richmond Railroad was not struck till the 3d of May, and the damage done it was very slight.† This is sufficiently shown by the fact that on the 5th the cars conveyed to Richmond the Confederate wounded and the Union prisoners‡ captured in the battle of Chancellorsville. The raid had, undoubtedly, the effect to alarm the country through which the columns moved, and much property was destroyed; but its military result, as bearing on the main operation, was quite insignificant.

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* Report of General R. E. Lee on the Battle of Chancellorsville, p. 15; Report of General Stuart, p. 38; Report of General W H. F. Lee, p. 49.

† "The damage done to the railroad was small and soon repaired, and the James River Canal was saved from injury."—Report of General Lee, p. 15.

‡ Hooker's testimony: Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 140.

VIII.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE BATTLE OF CHANCELLORSVILLE.

The simple recital I have made of the operations attending the battle of Chancellorsville will have served to reveal the extraordinary character of that action, which, opening with an exhibition of grand tactics marked by masterly skill, sank into conduct so feeble and faulty, as to be almost beneath criticism.

1. It is in war as in life: a single false step often involves an endless train of swift-succeeding misfortune. This false step in the conduct of Hooker was that, having started out to fight an offensive battle, he reduced himself, at the very moment when action was above all imperative, to a perilous defensive. The strategic operation of crossing the Rappahannock merits all the praise it has received. It was accomplished with complete success, and resulted in placing at Chancellorsville on the night of Thursday, April 30, four corps, in a position on the rear of the left of the Confederate defensive line, with Lee's forces scattered down the Rappahannock, a distance of five-and-twenty miles. All the enemy between Hooker and Fredericksburg was a mere handful of a division. Then was the moment for a bold initiative on the part of Hooker. Then was the time for vigorous impulse and fiery action before his opponent recovered himself. By what prompting of chivalrous generosity, rare in war—and eclipsing forever the conduct of the commander of the English Guards, who at Fontenoy insisted on the French delivering the first fire—was it that in this situation he voluntarily resigned all the advantage of the surprise, and allowed Lee forty-eight hours to concentrate against him?

2. That delay at Chancellorsville from Thursday afternoon till Saturday afternoon undid all that had been accomplished.

It is true that the Wilderness is a region unfavorable for manœuvring a large army; but it was as bad for Lee as for Hooker, and the latter is estopped from availing himself of this excuse by his own order, in which he declared it to be "ground of his own selection." Besides, this objection wholly disappears in face of the fact that the reconnoissances of Friday, May 1st, showed he might have pushed out beyond the woods, thus uncovering Banks' Ford, reducing the line of communications by twelve miles, and practically uniting both his wings. To the "special wonder" of all the commanders, he relinquished the fine position then gained, and stood on the defensive in the Wilderness.

3. But for a defensive battle the disposition of his army was faulty—the ground being commanded in front, and the right flank thrown out "in the air," whereas it might have been securely rested on the Rapidan. This afforded Lee his opportunity, and with consummate address, and a marvellous boldness, considering the disparity of his force, he on Saturday morning set on foot the execution of Jackson's flank march to attack the Union right. This is an operation usually condemned in war; but the conditions justified it, seeing that Jackson was able to mask his movement, and success crowned it.

4. During the whole of Saturday, while Jackson was executing his flank march, the Confederate commander held Hooker's fifty thousand men with the division of Anderson and part of McLaws—eight brigades, or twelve thousand men. Not a motion of offence was made by Hooker all this time.

5. After the disaster to the Eleventh Corps on Saturday night, Hooker made every thing to hinge on Sedgwick's advance to join him, which was to make the greater contingent on the lesser. His orders to Sedgwick, sent at ten o'clock of Saturday night, and received about midnight, were to move up from his position below Fredericksburg, take the heights, and move out by the plankroad towards Chancellorsville, distant fourteen miles. This move would, under the circumstances,

have been an impossibility, even had no enemy interposed. Sedgwick, after a gallant assault in which he suffered heavy loss, carried the Fredericksburg heights on Sunday forenoon; and he then moved out to obey Hooker's instructions to fall upon Lee's rear at Chancellorsville, but was stopped by the enemy at Salem Heights.

6. But meanwhile, on Sunday morning Hooker had been driven back at Chancellorsville. Moreover, the operations ending in the giving ground of the army at Chancellorsville were over five hours before Sedgwick attacked Salem Heights. It is therefore evident, that unless the Sixth Corps could, single-handed, fight all the force brought against it, the sole object of taking the heights of Fredericksburg, or uncovering Banks' Ford, was to hold a position from which the army might debouch. Therefore the attack on Salem Heights was mere waste of men; and if those heights had been taken, the Sixth Corps never could have extricated itself. Sedgwick should not have been called forward from Fredericksburg, because to abandon the possession of the heights was to give up a positive gain for a remote possibility. If, however, Sedgwick was to be expected to make a junction with the force at Chancellorsville, Hooker was committed by every consideration of honor and duty to so act as to make the junction possible. Yet he did not make the slightest effort as a diversion in Sedgwick's favor; but allowed Lee to countermarch at pleasure from his front a force sufficient to first check and then overwhelm Sedgwick. General Hooker lays the blame of the disaster at Chancellorsville to Sedgwick's failure to join him on Sunday morning. "In my judgment," says he, "General Sedgwick did not obey the spirit of my order, and made no sufficient effort to obey it. His movement was delayed so long that the enemy discovered his intentions; and when that was done, he was necessarily delayed in the further execution of the order."* This is a cruel charge to bring against a commander now beyond the reach of de-

* Hooker's testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War.

traction; whose brilliant exploit in carrying the Frederick burg heights and his subsequent fortitude in a trying situation, shine out as the one relieving brightness amid the gloo of that hapless battle.

7 From the time when, at noon of Sunday, Hooker w driven from the line at Chancellorsville, to his new line in t rear, he remained perfectly passive. Was all fight out him? Had the disaster to the Eleventh Corps, which nobod in the army regarded as of any moment (that corps hardl being accounted as belonging to the Army of the Potomac so paralyzed him that he could do nothing? Yet the disru tion of the Eleventh Corps had been more than made up b the arrival of Reynolds' corps (First) on Saturday night; an in the decisive action of Sunday, he employed little mo than half his force—neither Reynolds nor Meade bein allowed to go into action, though eager to do so. Hook allowed a position to be lost when he had more men at han that did not draw trigger than Lee had in his entire army!

8. It was Monday evening before Sedgwick was attacked and the whole interval from noon of Sunday, when th action of Chancellorsville ceased, till six o'clock on Monda evening—thirty hours—was available to re-enforce Sedgwic which might readily have been done on a short line *v* United States and Banks' fords. Yet no attempt was mad to do so. Lee made good use of this time in re-enforcing th wing opposed to Sedgwick, so that he was able at night t drive the Sixth Corps across the river after a severe actio in which Sedgwick's guns booming out like signals of distre were heard at Chancellorsville. Indeed, such was Hooker delusion (to use the mildest term) regarding the situatio that on Sunday afternoon, at the time Sedgwick was com pletely enveloped, he sent word to that officer stating that h (Hooker) "had driven the enemy, and all it wanted was f him (Sedgwick) to come up and complete Lee's destruction

9. Even after Sedgwick had withdrawn across the Rapp hannock at Banks' Ford on Monday, Hooker might have r mained indefinitely on the third line he had caused to l

prepared. It was of impregnable strength—both flanks resting on the river; and the army could here have repelled all assaults. The whole army wished this; and a successful action, ending in Lee's repulse, would have saved the *morale* and pride of the troops. It has been said that the storm of May 5th, which caused a rise in the Rappahannock, and endangered the supplies of the army, was a motive for retreat. But the order to retire was given twelve hours before any rain and during a cloudless sky.

10. Not the Army of the Potomac was beaten at Chancellorsville, but its commander; and General Hooker's conduct inflicted a very severe blow to his reputation. The officers despised his generalship, and the rank and file were puzzled at the result of a battle in which they had been foiled without being fought, and caused to retreat without the consciousness of having been beaten.

IX.

THE GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN.

JUNE—JULY, 1863.

I.

THEORY OF THE CONFEDERATE INVASION.

IN the minds of that group of able and sagacious men tha at Richmond controlled the course of the mighty experimen of war, there had early grown up a theory of military conduc that was undoubtedly the best adapted to the circumstances and, indeed, is the only theory on which a defensive war ca be maintained with any hope of success.

It is now generally conceded that a Power that either vol untarily or by compulsion allows itself to be reduced to purely defensive attitude is certain to be compelled, sooner o later, to succumb. On the other hand, military history afford many memorable illustrations of the marvellous results tha may be accomplished by nations that, forced to the defensiv by the superiority of the assailant, are yet able at the oppor tune moment to assume the offensive, and inflict blows a well as receive them. It was by acting on this principle tha Frederick the Great, in that everlasting model of a defensiv campaign, the Seven Years' War, was able to make hea against the seemingly overwhelming combination brough against him; and that Napoleon, in 1814, in that other brigh exemplar of the defence of a country by boldly taking th offensive, was able to confront the invading Allies, and a length make them pay so dearly for the capture of hi capital.

Chas. G. Meade

Such was the principle of action early adopted by the Confederate leaders; and the course of this narrative has already set forth the bold and successful manner in which it was more than once carried out. It was in accordance with this policy that General Johnston, after falling back from Yorktown to the front of Richmond, turned upon McClellan astride the Chickahominy, and dealt him a blow which but for accidental circumstances should have terminated the campaign—a result that, indeed, was accomplished, when Lee, continuing the conception of Johnston, seized the initiative and hurled the Union army back to the James River. And it was in following out the same line of action that he was able, by threatening the flanks and rear of Pope, to drive back that general to the fortifications of Washington, and transfer the theatre of war to the trans-Potomac region.

It seemed that an opportunity for a new and bolder offensive than had yet been attempted now presented itself. Twice the Army of the Potomac had crossed the Rappahannock, and on each occasion it had been driven back in disaster. Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville had raised the *morale* of Lee's army to the highest pitch. While the experience of these battles had inspirited the Southern troops, it had given General Lee himself a sense of confidence and power he had not before felt. And now to this fact of the moral condition of the Confederate army, so favorable to bold enterprises, was added another incentive, in its condition of material strength. The diminution of Hooker's force by the extensive out-mustering of short-term troops* was well known;

* The regiments thus mustered out of service by the expiration of their term were among the fruits of that hap-hazard hand-to-mouth policy of enlistment that governed the military administration throughout the war. The two years troops had been enrolled for that period at a time when all were eager to be enlisted "for the war;" and the nine-months' men were from the improvised levies which the Secretary of War, in his panic at Jackson's razzia in the Shenandoah Valley in July, 1862, had called out at that time. It is needless to remark that their term of service expired just about the time they became somewhat seasoned to war.

and to this relative increase of Lee's army was now added a positive increase by a large force of conscripts, and a more important re-enforcement by the two divisions of Longstreet's corps, which, having been operating south of James River at the time of the battle of Chancellorsville, were immediately thereafter recalled to take part in the meditated movement. If Hooker's force of infantry was at this time reduced, as he declares, to an effective of eighty thousand men,* there was now less disproportion between the two armies than generally obtained, for at the end of May, Lee's force had reached an aggregate of sixty-eight thousand infantry and a considerable body of cavalry.† The Confederate army had, moreover, been lately mobilized and increased in efficiency by its reorganization into three *corps d'armée*, under Generals Longstreet, Hill, and Ewell—three able, energetic, and trusted lieutenants. In respect of transportation, equipment, and clothing, though not in respect of supplies, the Southern force in Virginia was in better condition than at any previous time. And if its commissariat was deficient, the rich granaries of the North lay open—the inviting spoils of a successful blow.‡

* Letter from General Hooker to President Lincoln, May 13, 1863: "My marching force of infantry is cut down to *about eighty thousand men.*" The cavalry corps which, on Hooker's entrance into command, had been rendered stronger and more effective than ever before, was much reduced by the severe service to which it had been put. General Pleasonton, who succeeded General Stoneman in the command of the cavalry, gives its effective, at the end of May, at four thousand six hundred and seventy-seven horses—one-third its strength by the March report.—Report of General Pleasonton, May 27th.

† This is the number *present for duty* the 31st of May: it was precisely 68,352; the *aggregate present* was 88,754. I learn from General Longstreet that General Lee, when at Chambersburg, estimated that his force when concentrated would reach a trifle over 70,000 men. General Longstreet added, that the Army of Northern Virginia was at this time in condition to undertake *any thing*.

‡ There is no doubt that the condition of Lee's commissariat at this time had considerable to do with the invasion. General Longstreet told me a story to this point, the authenticity of which, however, he did not vouch for. Shortly before the movement, it seems, General Lee sent to Richmond a requisition for a certain amount of rations. The Commissary-General Northrup indorsed on it: "If General Lee wishes rations, let him seek them in Pennsylvania!"

Thus prompted, the Confederate leaders resolved upon a movement that should not only have the effect of causing the Army of the Potomac to loose its hold upon the Rappahannock, but should initiate a campaign of invasion on the soil of the loyal States. And it is proper to point out here that in coming to this determination, those who controlled the war-councils at Richmond would seem to have been influenced rather by the excited condition of the army and the South, than by a just appreciation of their proper defensive policy. This not only did not exclude, but it invited the seizing of favorable opportunities to throw back the Army of the Potomac from its aggressive advances into Virginia, and, if possible, force it across the Potomac. But to convert these offensive returns into out-and-out invasion was to overleap their true policy and enter upon an enterprise uncertain, perilous, and costly. The experience of the Maryland campaign of the previous year might already have made this manifest; and hence it would appear that the Richmond leaders, in resolving to push the aggression into Pennsylvania, took counsel not so much from prudence as from the clamors of the Hotspurs of the South, who, fretting at the defensive attitude held by Lee during the past twelve months, now burned to see the theatre of war transferred to Northern soil.* The close of May found the army ready to launch on this seductive but fatal adventure.

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* The vague flying rumors and the significant intimations of the Southern press had given Hooker reason to anticipate some hostile movement on the part of Lee, and on the 28th of May he communicated this conviction to Washington. "You may rest assured," said he, "that important movements are being made. I am in doubt as to the direction he [Lee] will take, but probably the one of last year, however desperate it may appear."—Dispatch from Hooker to Secretary Stanton.

II.

MANŒUVRES TO DISENGAGE HOOKER.

In execution of this project the first object with Lee was to disengage Hooker from the Rappahannock, and with this view secret movements were begun on the 3d of June. McLaws' division, of Longstreet's corps, that day left Fredericksburg for Culpepper Courthouse, and at the same time Hood's division, of Longstreet's corps, which, since its arrival from Richmond, had been encamped on the Rapidan, marched to the same place. On the 4th and 5th Ewell's corps was given the same direction. Meanwhile, the corps of A. P. Hill was left to occupy the lines of Fredericksburg.*

Made aware of *some* movement in the enemy's camp, but unable to determine its precise nature, Hooker, with the view of a closer reconnoissance, threw Sedgwick's corps, on the 6th, across the Rappahannock at Franklin's Crossing; but as Hill remained in position to mask the march of the other corps, all that Sedgwick discovered was that the enemy was in force. Lee, therefore, did not interrupt the march of Longstreet and Ewell towards Culpepper, which place they reached on the 8th.† Hooker was still in ignorance of Lee's purpose, which was at length disclosed in the following manner.

Stuart's cavalry had already been concentrated at Culpepper some time before the commencement of the main movement; and the knowledge of this fact, which seemed to indicate some hostile intent, determined Hooker to send his whole cavalry corps to break up Stuart's camp.‡ Accordingly, on the 9th,

* Lee: Report of the Gettysburg Campaign.

† Ibid.

‡ "As the accumulation of the heavy rebel force of cavalry about Culpepper may mean mischief, I am determined, if practicable, to break it up in its incipiency. I shall send all my cavalry against them, stiffened by about three thousand infantry."—Dispatch of General Hooker to General Halleck, June 6th.

General Pleasonton, with two divisions of cavalry under Buford and Gregg, supported by two picked brigades of infantry under Russell and Ames, crossed the Rappahannock at Kelly's and Beverley's fords, to move by converging roads on Culpepper. But Stuart, having already moved forward from Culpepper to Brandy Station, *en route* to form the advance and cover the flank of the main movement, a rencounter took place soon after the Union cavalry passed the river.

Crossing at Beverley's Ford, and advancing through the woodland, Buford immediately encountered a Confederate brigade under General Jones, which, after a considerable combat,* he drove back for a couple of miles, when he found himself checked by the arrival of the brigades of W H. F. Lee and Wade Hampton to the support of Jones. Hereupon severe fighting followed; but presently Stuart was compelled to draw off to face a menace by another force threatening his rear.† This threat came from the column under Gregg, which had crossed at Kelly's Ford, and advanced towards Brandy Station, its progress being disputed by a Confederate brigade under General Robertson. Pushing on towards Brandy Station, a spirited passage at arms took place for the possession of the heights, which were at length carried by Gregg. Stuart having withdrawn the main portion of the three brigades from Buford's front, then approached quickly, and a determined combat ensued. Considerable loss occurred on both sides, and finally Gregg, finding that the other column had not been able to move up to make a junction with him, fell back towards his right and rear and united with the division under Buford, whereupon General Pleasonton retired his command across the Rappahannock. This engagement between the entire mounted force of the opposing armies was an interesting one, because it was of the few encounters on a

* In this action, Colonel B. F. Davis, of the Eighth New York Cavalry, was killed. Colonel Davis was a gallant officer, and during the investment of Colonel Miles at Harper's Ferry cut his way through Jackson's lines, saving his force and capturing a portion of Longstreet's trains.

† General Stuart: Report of the Battle of Fleetwood.

large scale in which the cavalry fought in legitimate cavalry style; for the troopers commonly dismounted and used their carbines—a circumstance that ordinarily made these affairs quite insignificant and indecisive. The loss was between five and six hundred on each side.*

This engagement had the important result of developing at once Lee's presence at Culpepper and his design of invasion, disclosures of both of which facts were found in captured correspondence. To meet this menace, Hooker advanced his right up the Rappahannock, throwing forward the Third Corps, on the 11th, to Rappahannock Station and Beverley, while the cavalry observed the upper forks of the river. But while Hooker had his attention thus directed towards Culpepper and to guarding the line of the Rappahannock, with the view to prevent a crossing of that stream by the enemy, —who, it was supposed, would follow the same line of manœuvre adopted in the advance during the preceding summer against Pope,—Lee had taken another leap in advance, and thrust forward his left into the Shenandoah Valley. Leaving Hill's corps still in the position at Fredericksburg, and Longstreet's corps at Culpepper, Ewell's corps was, on the 10th, put in motion westward and northward, avoiding the Rappahannock altogether till he reached the Blue Ridge, through which he passed at Chester Gap. Then striking Front Royal, he crossed the Shenandoah River, and burst into the Valley Advancing rapidly towards Winchester, he arrived before that place on the evening of the 13th, after an advance from Culpepper of seventy miles in three days.

Such was the startling intelligence that now reached Hooker, who still lay on the Rappahannock; and action, prompt and vigorous, was seen to be instantly necessary. A glance at the map will reveal the extraordinary situation of the Confederate force at this time. On the 13th of June, with the Army of the Potomac yet lying on the Rappahannock, Lee's line of battle was stretched out over an interval of up-

* General W H. F. Lee was among the wounded.

wards of a hundred miles: for his right (Hill's corps) still held the lines of Fredericksburg; his centre (Longstreet's corps) lay at Culpepper; and his left (Ewell's corps) was at the mouth of the Shenandoah Valley!

Now, it will doubtless not be difficult for any one capable of looking at the map of Northern Virginia with a military eye, to base on these data a plan of action which it may be supposed would be the plan of action suited to the circumstances. But it would be altogether unjust to judge what General Hooker did, or what he failed to do, by the simple results of military reasoning; for in the relations which he held to the central military authority at Washington—an authority to which his own views were completely subordinated—he had neither the freedom of willing nor of acting.

It would appear obvious that in the audacious situation of Lee's army (and this very boldness would seem to imply a great contempt for his opponent), the proper place for Hooker to strike was at that exposed rear of his long line formed by Hill's corps; for it is as sure an inference as any inference in war can be, that a force of, say, two or three corps, thrown across the Rappahannock at Banks' or United States ford, could interpose itself between Hill (at Fredericksburg) and Longstreet (at Culpepper). And if the movement did not insure Hill's destruction (which it ought to do, in vigorous hands), his jeopardized situation would certainly recall Lee's other forces to his support. This interruption of the plan of invasion would be its ending.

It is an interesting fact that precisely this method of action was suggested by General Hooker a short time before he became aware of Lee's actual movement,* and authority for its execution was asked in case the Confederate force should move northward.† To this most judicious suggestion two replies, or rather two forms of the same reply—for the *opinion* was Halleck's—were returned. The one was from the Pres-

* Dispatch from Hooker to Halleck.

† Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 153.

ident, disapproving the project, and couched in that quaint imagery which Mr. Lincoln was wont to employ in the expression of his thoughts on the gravest subjects. "If Lee," said he, "should leave a rear force at Fredericksburg, tempting you to fall upon it, he would fight you in intrenchments,* and have you at disadvantage; and so, man for man, worst you at that point, while his main force would in some way be getting an advantage of you northward. In a word, I would not take any risk of being entangled upon the river, *like an ox jumped half over a fence, and liable to be torn by dogs front and rear, without a fair chance to gore one way or to kick the other.*"†

The other reply was from General Halleck, and it expressed, in solemn military jargon, the same opinion so pungently conveyed by the President;‡ but suggested an operation against the "flank of the moving column"—a suggestion that is nothing better than a mask, for General Halleck must have known such an operation to be perfectly impracticable, if Hooker was to have any observance of his express instructions to cover Washington.§

III.

HOOKER'S RETROGRADE MOVEMENT.

Thus prevented from taking the only step that would have given him the initiative, Hooker was fain to fall back on the interior line towards Washington, taking positions defensive

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* Nothing easier than to turn the Fredericksburg defences by Banks' or United States ford.

† Dispatch from President Lincoln to General Hooker, June 5.

‡ Dispatch from General Halleck to General Hooker: Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 154.

§ *Any* possible movement by Hooker, in execution of this suggestion, would have uncovered his right, and given General Lee precisely the opening for such a dash on Washington which the report of that general shows he was warily watching.

as regards the capital, and which would enable him to await the development of Lee's designs. Upon learning the movement of the enemy into the Shenandoah Valley, Hooker, on the 13th, broke up his camps along the Rappahannock, and moved rapidly on the direct route towards Washington, following and covering the line of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. The first move was to Bealton, Warrenton, and Catlett's Station, on the 13th and 14th; next to Fairfax Station and Manassas, on the 15th and 16th. Here he remained several days, while awaiting the disclosure of a series of movements which Lee was then making, and to the exposition of which I now return.

When on the 13th Hill, holding the lines of Fredericksburg, saw the Union army disappear behind the Stafford hills, he knew that that for which he had remained behind was accomplished, and he then took up his line of march towards Culpepper, where Longstreet's corps still held position. Meantime, Ewell was making his Jackson-like swoop into the Valley. General Jenkins with his cavalry-brigade had been ordered to advance towards Winchester, in cooperation with Ewell, and Imboden with his troopers had been thrown out in the direction of Romney, to cover the movement on Winchester, and prevent its garrison from receiving re-enforcements from the troops on the line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. Both these officers were in position when Ewell reached the Valley. On crossing the Shenandoah River near Front Royal, Ewell detached Rodes' division to Berryville, to cut off communication between Winchester and the Potomac, while with the divisions of Early and Johnson he advanced directly upon that Federal post, driving Milroy into his works around the town on the 13th. The following night, Milroy abandoned his position, but his force being intercepted, a good part of it was captured in the confused *melée*. As, at the same time, General Rodes took Berryville with seven hundred prisoners, and the garrison at Harper's Ferry withdrew to Maryland Heights, the Valley was now cleared of all Union force.

In this exploit Ewell captured over four thousand prisoners, twenty-nine pieces of artillery, and large stores. Milroy with a handful of men escaped across the Potomac. His defence of the post intrusted to his care was infamously feeble, and the worst of that long train of misconduct that made the Valley of the Shenandoah to be called the "Valley of Humiliation."

Turning back to the other two corps of Lee's army, it appears that on Hill's advance from Fredericksburg to Culpepper, Longstreet, who had been retained at the latter place, was pushed northward; but instead of following the route of Ewell, he moved along the eastern side of the Blue Ridge, taking position at Ashby's and Snicker's Gaps. This served as a cover to Hill, who slipped through behind Longstreet into the Shenandoah Valley, and took position at Winchester, while, at the same time, it served as a lure to draw Hooker from his base.*

During the progress of these movements, Hooker, being determined not to be drawn into a manœuvre that would expose his right, continued to hold position in the vicinity of Fairfax and Manassas, covering the approaches to Washington, while the cavalry under Pleasonton was thrown out to feel towards the passes of the Blue Ridge. Here Longstreet's corps continued still to hold post, while his whole front was secured by Stuart's troopers. At Aldie, the opposing cavalry had, on the 17th, a rencounter, which partly developed Lee's position to Hooker, who then felt forward cautiously, sending the Twelfth Corps to Leesburg, the Fifth to Aldie, and the Second to Thoroughfare Gap. Pleasonton, meanwhile, followed up Stuart, driving him on the 20th through Middleburg, and on the 21st through Upperville and beyond. But Hooker did not continue a movement which he felt to be compromising.

* General Lee in his report explicitly declares this to have been his purpose. "*With a view to draw him* [Hooker] *further from his base, etc.*, Longstreet advanced along the east side of the Blue Ridge, occupying Ashby's and Snicker's Gap It seemed to be the purpose of General Hooker to take a position which would enable him to cover the approaches to Washington City."

Meantime, Lee seemed to be master of the situation. He held strong positions in the Shenandoah Valley where he was ready to welcome battle from his opponent, should he advance, while he was free to cut loose a raiding column into Maryland and Pennsylvania. The longer Hooker remained on the south bank of the Potomac, the freer would be the scope of the foraging forces, and when he should cross to the north side, Lee, relieved from the danger to his communications, would be able to pass to the north bank also, which was altogether in the line of his plan of invasion.

In pursuance of this purpose, as soon as Hill and Longstreet had relieved Ewell in the Valley, that general with the van of the invading columns passed, on the 22d, into Maryland, while Imboden's cavalry was thrown out westward, and effectually destroyed the great lines of communication by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. Jenkins' troopers had already preceded Ewell's advance by a week, and had penetrated Pennsylvania as far as Chambersburg, throwing the whole north country into a wild blaze of excitement. After gathering in much cattle and horses, which he headed towards the Potomac, Jenkins turned back to join Ewell's force, which, after crossing the Potomac, on the 22d, at Williamsport and Shepherdstown, moved by two columns on Hagerstown, and thence, crossing the boundary into Pennsylvania, passed up the Cumberland Valley, reaching Chambersburg on the following day. The whole region of Western Pennsylvania up to the Susquehannah was now open to Ewell, free to come and to go, without any other fear than that which might be inspired by the not very formidable aspect of the Pennsylvania militia.*

* Forewarned of the designs of the invading army, the War Department had detached General Couch from the command of the Second Corps of the Army of the Potomac, and assigned him, on the 11th of June, to the Department of the Susquehanna, with his headquarters at Harrisburg, the capital of Pennsylvania. General Brooks was at the same time appointed to the command of the Department of the Monongahela, with his headquarters at Pittsburgh. But commanders without troops to command cannot be considered very

He had, therefore, free scope for an extensive commerce in horses and cattle, vast herds of which he sent southward, while for the subsistence of his troops he levied subsidies from the population of the country. Thousands of Pennsylvania farmers, panic-stricken, hastened with their cattle and household goods to the north of the Susquehanna. From Chambersburg, Ewell moved northward, sending Rodes' division to Carlisle, while Early's division, moving to the east side of the South Mountain ridge, passed by way of Gettysburg to York, and thence to Wrightsville on the Susquehanna—the militia retiring and destroying the splendid bridge over the river at Columbia.

IV.

ACROSS THE BORDER.

However galling the intelligence of the ravaging of Pennsylvania may have been, General Hooker at least felt himself powerless to help, for it was impossible for him to pass to the north side of the Potomac until his opponent's purpose should be more fully disclosed. It was not, therefore, until he learned that the remaining corps of Lee were passing into Maryland that he also crossed the river. The corps of Longstreet and Hill made the passage of the Potomac at Williamsport and Shepherdstown on the 24th and 25th, and followed the path of Ewell into Pennsylvania.

The entire army of the Potomac then crossed on the 25th and 26th at Edwards' Ferry, and made a movement of concentration on Frederick—a position from which Hooker might

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formidable barriers to an invasion; and though Governor Curtin issued proclamations and General Couch calls, the response was neither prompt nor enthusiastic, and when at length a few thousand men had been raised, and New York had sent forward some of her militia regiments, these officers did not find it practicable to carry their views of defence beyond the line of the Susquehanna.

either debouch through the South Mountain passes to plant himself upon Lee's line of retreat, or moving northward on the eastern side of the mountains, follow Lee's movement in the direction of the Susquehanna.

The former course is of the two the bolder and more decisive move, and though there is no proof that is conclusive respecting which of these courses General Hooker designed to adopt, there is yet evidence that he purposed making, at least, a strong demonstration on Lee's line of communications. With this view he threw out his left well westward to Middletown, and ordered the Twelfth Corps, under General Slocum, to march to Harper's Ferry. Here Slocum was to be joined by the garrison of that post, eleven thousand strong, under General French, and the united force was to menace the Confederate rear by a movement towards Chambersburg. Unhappily, this project traversed the pet crotchet of General Halleck respecting Harper's Ferry, and thence began griefs for Hooker, and an imbroglio more and more involved till it resulted in his supersedure from command at the critical moment when the two armies were manœuvring towards a collision the weightiest of the war. The circumstances under which this took place are as follows.

At the time Lee's advance was set on foot, the distribution of the Union forces showed the same vicious *amorcellement* under independent commanders that had marked the worst period of 1862. General Heintzelman commanded the Department of Washington, with a force of about thirty-six thousand men ;* General Schenck controlled the Middle Department, east of Cumberland, including the garrisons at Harper's Ferry, Winchester, etc. ; while General Dix, with a considerable force, lay for some purpose inconceivable on the Peninsula. Now, about the time Hooker crossed the Potomac, the general-in-chief, awakening at length to the fatal folly of this untimely waste of valuable force, placed the troops of

* General Heintzelman's tri-monthly report for June 10, showed thirty-six thousand six hundred and forty men.

Generals Heintzelman and Schenck under his control. But it was soon proved that this control was rather in name than in reality; for when he attempted to fit out from these departments a column of fifteen thousand men to move on Frederick, he found himself estopped by General Halleck's fears touching the safety of Washington—a circumstance for which General Hooker conceived he provided sufficiently by the presence of the Army of the Potomac covering the capital; and when, after advancing on Frederick, he had planned the movement on the rear of Lee, and for that purpose had directed the temporary abandonment of Harper's Ferry, with the view of uniting its garrison of eleven thousand men under General French with the column of General Slocum destined to make the proposed movement, he asked General Halleck, on the 26th of June, "if there was any reason why Maryland Heights should not be abandoned after the removal of the public stores and property," he was met by the following reply from the general-in-chief: "Maryland Heights have always been regarded as an important point to be held by us, *and much expense and labor incurred in fortifying them.* I cannot approve their abandonment except in case of absolute necessity."* It was in vain that General Hooker urged in rejoinder of this fatuitous objection that Harper's Ferry was, under the circumstances, a point of no importance; that it defended no ford of the Potomac; that its fortifications would remain after the troops were withdrawn; nor was there the slightest probability that the enemy would take possession of them, and that, therefore, the ten thousand men that remained there useless, should be marched to a point where they could be of service.†

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* Telegram from General Halleck to General Hooker, June 27: Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 292.

† The text of General Hooker's dispatch is as follows:

SANDY HOOK, June 27, 1863

MAJOR-GENERAL HALLECK, *General-in-chief:*

I have received your telegram in regard to Harper's Ferry. I find ten thousand men here in condition to take the field. Here they are of no earthly

Against stupidity, sings Schiller, gods and men fight in vain.

Finding himself deprived of that freedom of action on which, in so large a degree, the success of military operations depends, General Hooker requested, on the 27th of June, to be relieved from the command of the Army of the Potomac; and early the following morning, a messenger reached Frederick from Washington with an order appointing Major-General G. G. Meade, commanding the Fifth Army Corps, in his stead.

Provoking as was the behavior of General Halleck, the conduct of General Hooker cannot be accounted noble or high-minded. A truly lofty sense of duty would have dictated much long-suffering, in a conjuncture of circumstances amid which the success of the campaign might be seriously compromised by the sudden change of commanders. Yet it was fortunate for the Union cause at this crisis, that the choice of the Government for the commander of the Army of the Potomac fell upon one who proved fitted for the high trust; and fortunate, too, that that oft-displayed steadfastness of the army, "unshaked of motion" and committed to the death to a duty self-imposed, rendered such transitions, elsewhere dangerous, here safe and easy. Meade put his hand to his work in a quiet, practical, business-like way; and it was remarked that his undemonstrative temper, and the aspect he wore of a scholar rather than a soldier, were no drawback to the confidence of the troops, who had learned from the experience of his predecessor, that high-flown

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account. They cannot defend a ford of the river; and as far as Harper's Ferry is concerned, *there is nothing in it.* As for the fortifications, the work of the troops, they remain when the troops are withdrawn. No enemy will ever take possession of it for *them.* This is my opinion. All the public property could have been secured to-night, and the troops marched to where they could have been of some service. Now, they are but a bait for the rebels should they re turn. I beg that this may be presented to the Secretary of War, and his ex cellency the President.

JOSEPH HOOKER, Major-General.

promise is often associated with very disproportionate performance. Without being what is called a popular officer, General Meade was much respected by his comrades in arms. He was known in the army as one who had grown up with it, whose advancement was due to merit, and who had shown a special steadfastness in many trying hours. The command of the Army of the Potomac was put into his hand without any lets or hindrances, the President expressly waiving all the powers of the Executive and the Constitution, so as to enable General Meade to make, untrammelled, the best dispositions for the emergency.

Immediately the columns moved on as if no change had occurred.

V

CONCENTRATION ON GETTYSBURG.

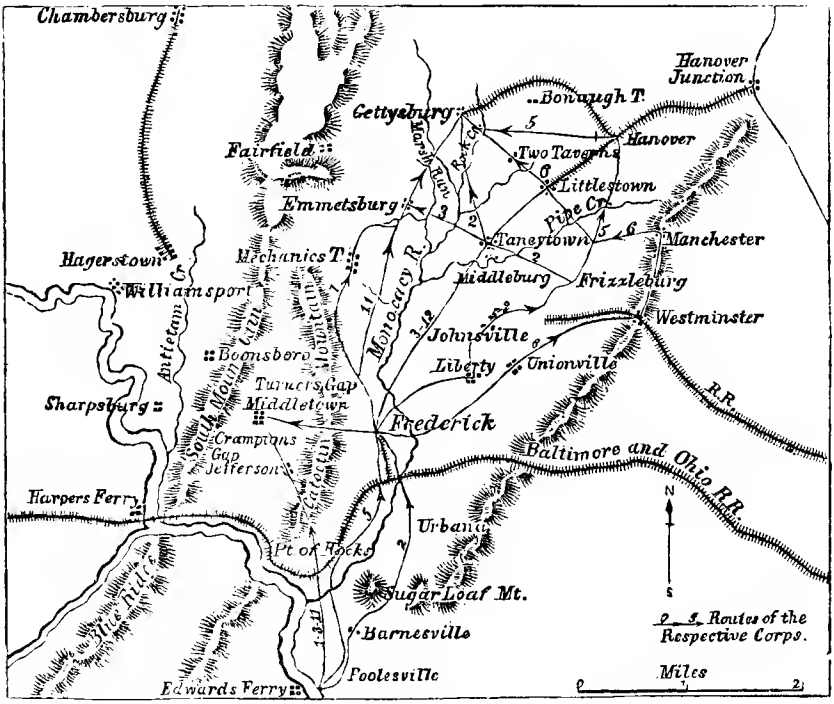
At the time General Meade took command, the army was lying around and near Frederick—its left at Middletown; and all he knew touching the enemy was, that Lee, after crossing the Potomac, had marched up the Cumberland Valley, and that Ewell's corps occupied York and Carlisle, and threatened the passage of the Susquehanna at Columbia and Harrisburg.

In this state of facts, Meade adopted the only course then considered by him practicable, which was to move his army by the inner line from Frederick towards Harrisburg, continuing the movement until he should meet Lee, or make him loose his hold on the Susquehanna.

He therefore put his army in motion on the morning of the 29th, taking a course due northward, and keeping east of the South Mountain range. The army moved in three columns, covering, as it advanced, the lines of approach to Baltimore and Washington. The First and Eleventh corps were directed on Emmettsburg; the Third and Twelfth on Taney-

town; the Second on Frizzleburg; the Fifth to Union, and the Sixth to Windsor.

Now, on the very day that Meade began to move northward, Lee, apprised of those previous manœuvres that seemed to threaten an irruption into the Cumberland Valley (a step which would imperil his communications with the Potomac), discovered it would be necessary to do something to check this menace. At this time Longstreet and Hill were at



SKETCH OF MANŒUVRES ON GETTYSBURG.

Chambersburg, Ewell was at York and Carlisle, and Lee was just on the point of moving his whole force northward to cross the Susquehanna and strike Harrisburg;* when, learning the already mentioned menace, he resolved to concentrate on the east side of the South Mountain range as a diversion

* "Preparations were now made to advance upon Harrisburg; but on the night of the 28th information was received from a scout that the Federal army, having crossed the Potomac, was advancing northward, and that the head of the column had reached South Mountain. As our communications

in favor of his line of retreat, touching which he was justifiably nervous. Accordingly, instead of directing Longstreet and Hill to join Ewell on the intended invasion, he ordered them to march from Chambersburg, defiling through the South Mountain range, towards Gettysburg, distant twenty miles eastward; and he instructed Ewell to countermarch from York and Carlisle on the same point. These movements were begun on the morning of Monday, the 29th of June.

It was not until the night of the 30th, after the army had made two marches, that General Meade became satisfied that Lee, apprised of his movement, had loosed his hold on the Susquehanna and was concentrating his forces east of the South Mountain to meet him. But when and where the shock of battle, which was now seen to be imminent, would take place it was impossible to tell. Under these circumstances, he set about to select a position on which, by a rapid movement of concentration, he might be prepared to receive battle on advantageous terms. With this view, the general line of Pipe Creek, on the dividing ridge between the Monocacy and the waters running into the Chesapeake Bay, was selected as a favorable position, though its ultimate adoption was held contingent on developments that might arise. Accordingly, orders were issued on the night of the 30th for the movements of the different corps on the following day: the Sixth Corps, forming the right wing of the army, was ordered to Manchester in rear of Pipe Creek; headquarters and the Second Corps to Taneytown; the Twelfth and Fifth corps, forming the centre, were directed on Two Taverns and Hanover, somewhat in advance of Pipe Creek; while the left wing, formed of the First, Third, and Eleventh corps under General Reynolds, as it was closest to the line of march of the enemy, was thrown forward to Gettysburg, towards which, as it happened, Lee was then heading.

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with the Potomac were thus menaced, it was resolved to prevent his further progress in that direction by concentrating our army on the east side of the mountains."—Lee: Report of the Gettysburg Campaign.

Strategically, the position at Gettysburg was of supreme importance to Lee; for it was the first point in his eastward march across the South Mountain that gave command of direct lines of retreat towards the Potomac: but it was not of the same moment to Meade, especially if a defensive rather than an offensive battle was to be fought; and the topographical features of Gettysburg, that make it so advantageous for the defence, were then wholly unknown to him. While, therefore, the left wing, under Reynolds, was thus thrown forward in advance of the rest of the army as far as Gettysburg, it was not with any predetermined purpose of taking up position there; but rather to serve as a mask while the line of Pipe Creek was assumed.

But while, in war, commanders propose, fate or accident (so-called) often disposes; and at the time these movements were in execution, events were occurring that were to lift the obscure and insignificant hamlet of Gettysburg into a historic immortality as the scene of the mightiest encounter of modern days.

While the army was marching northward, Buford's division of cavalry was thrown out well on the left flank; and moving from near Middleburg on the 29th of June, it occupied Gettysburg at noon of the following day—the day before Reynolds was directed on that point. Passing through Gettysburg, Buford pushed out in reconnoissances west and north, over the routes on which it was supposed Lee's army was moving. Now, Lee had that morning put his columns in motion towards Gettysburg—Hill and Longstreet moving due eastward from Chambersburg and Fayetteville, and Ewell southward from Carlisle. Hill's corps had the advance on the great road from Chambersburg to Baltimore, which passes through Gettysburg. The march was made with much deliberation: so that night found only two divisions through the South Mountain; while the remaining division and Longstreet's corps remained west of the mountains. The advance divisions of Hill's command bivouacked, on the night of the 30th June, within six or seven miles of Gettysburg; while Ewell, march-

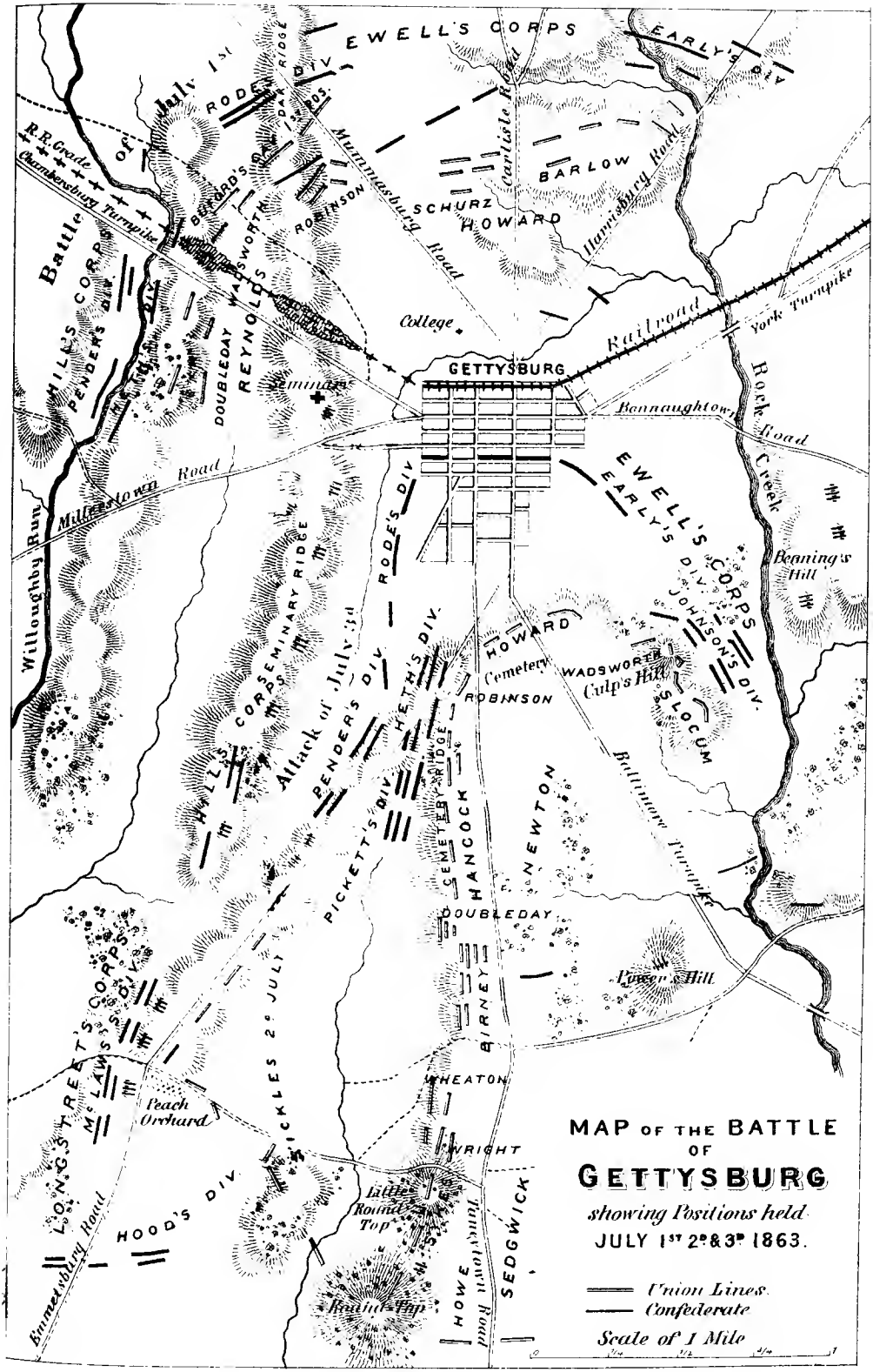
ing on a line perpendicular with the route of Hill and Longstreet, encamped at Heidersburg, distant nine miles. Of the Union force, Buford's cavalry division alone was at Gettysburg that night; and Reynolds, with the First and Eleventh corps, bivouacked on the right bank of Marsh Creek, distant four miles, under orders to make Gettysburg the next morning. The corps of Sickles (Third) and Slocum (Twelfth) were within call. The remaining corps were further off.

It is easy to see, from the relative situations of the hostile armies, that unless one or the other should fall back, a battle was inevitable in the vicinity of Gettysburg. But these facts were unknown to both the opposing commanders; and I shall in the next chapter relate how, contrary to the expectations of each, the action was precipitated.

VI.

GETTYSBURG—FIRST DAY.

On the morning of Wednesday, the 1st of July, the two Confederate columns continued their march towards Gettysburg; and Buford, holding position on the Chambersburg road, by which Hill and Longstreet were advancing, suddenly found himself engaged, a little past nine in the morning, with Hill's van, about a mile west of the town. As he knew that Reynolds was moving up to join him, he made dispositions to retard the enemy, holding back Hill's column by skilful deployments and the use of his horse-artillery. Reynolds, who (with his own First Corps and the Eleventh Corps, under General Howard) was then *en route* from his place of bivouac at Marsh Creek, hearing Buford's guns, pressed forward with all haste. At ten o'clock he came upon the field with the leading division of the First Corps, under General Wadsworth. While


MAP OF THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG
showing Positions held
JULY 1st 2d & 3d 1863.
Union Lines.
Confederate
Scale of 1 Mile
EWELL'S CORPS
EARLY'S DIV
RODES DIV
DAR RIDGE
BUFORD'S CAV
ROBINSON
WADSWORTH
REYNOLDS
DOUBLEDAY
SCHURZ
HOWARD
BARLOW
Carlisle Road
Harrisburg Road
Mummasburg Road
R.R. Grade
Chambersburg Turnpike
Battle of July 1st
HILL'S CORPS
PENDER'S DIV
HETH'S DIV
College
Seminary
GETTYSBURG
Railroad
York Turnpike
Rock Creek
Bennaughtown Road
Millerstown Road
Willoughby Run
EWELL'S CORPS
EARLY'S DIV
JOHNSON'S DIV
Benning's Hill
RODE'S DIV
SEMINARY RIDGE
HILL'S CORPS
Attack of July 3d
PENDER'S DIV
HETH'S DIV
HOWARD
Cemetery
WADSWORTH
Culp's Hill
ROBINSON
SLOCUM
Baltimore Turnpike
PICKETT'S DIV
CEMETERY RIDGE
HANCOCK
NEWTON
DOUBLEDAY
Power's Hill
BIRNEY
WHEATON
WRIGHT
SEDGWICK
HOWE
Tangytown Road
Round Top
Little Round Top
SICKLES 2d JULY
LONGSTREET'S CORPS
McLAWS'S DIV
Peach Orchard
HOOD'S DIV
Emmetsburg Road

yet forming line, Wadsworth's troops were assailed ; and they had to be thrown quickly into battle array under fire.

Looking westward from Gettysburg the horizon of vision is bounded at a distance of ten miles by the mountain range known as the South Mountain, which running north and south forms the eastern wall of the Cumberland Valley. When the force which folded and raised up the strata that form the South Mountain was in action, it produced fissures in the strata of red shale which cover the surface of this region of country, permitting the fused material from beneath to rise and fill them on cooling with trap-dykes or greenstone and syenitic greenstone. The rock, being for the most part very hard, remained as the axes and crests of hills and ridges when the softer shale in the intervening spaces was excavated by great water-currents into valleys and plains.* These ridges run in a direction nearly parallel with the South Mountain range, and give a rolling and diversified surface to the landscape. The town of Gettysburg nestles at the base of one of these ranges. At the distance of half a mile to the west of the town is another ridge, called, from the theological seminary that stands thereon, Seminary Ridge, and a mile further west run two other parallel swells of ground separated by Willoughby Run. It was in the plain between these two latter ridges, the westernmost of which was occupied by the Confederates and the nearer by the Union troops, that the action of July 1st opened ; for Buford's deployments had succeeded in detaining the hostile column on the farther side of the run till Wadsworth's division came on the ground. As this force arrived, Reynolds hurried its two brigades into action, placing Cutler's brigade, with the battery of Hall—the only battery in the division—on the right and left of the Chambersburg road and across an old railroad grading (part of it in deep cut and part in embankment) near by and parallel with the road ; while he directed General Doubleday

* Professor Jacobs : " Later Rambles over the Field of Gettysburg ;" United States Service Magazine, 1864.

who had reached the ground with the van of the infantry, to move the other brigade, usually called the "Iron Brigade," under General Meredith, to the left of the road to occupy a piece of woods skirting Willoughby Run, across which and into the woods the Confederate right was at the same time pushing. Only the advanced division of Hill's corps, under Heth, had yet come up, so that the opening combat which might fitly be called the battle of Willoughby's Run, was engaged between one division on each side. Heth, with his four brigades, attacked simultaneously the two brigades of Wadsworth's division under Generals Meredith and Cutler. The latter was assailed by Davis's Mississippi brigade, and with such success, that the three right regiments found themselves flanked, whereupon they were withdrawn over the Seminary Ridge, leaving the battery unsupported. Meanwhile, the skirmishers of Cutler's other two regiments (the Fourteenth Brooklyn, under Colonel Fowler, and the Ninety-fifth New York, under Colonel Biddle) were disputing with the Confederate brigade of Archer the passage of Willoughby Run, and skirmishing in a skirt of woods along the brook with such as had crossed. At this moment, the "Iron Brigade" opportunely swept down from the left, struck the flank of the Confederate brigade, and captured several hundred that had already crossed, including the commander, Brigadier-General Archer.* The dispositions at this point were made by General Reynolds in person; and it was at the moment when, after urging on his men with animating words, he saw this successful charge under way, and turned to leave the woods, that he was struck with a rifle-shot that caused almost instant death—a grievous loss to the Army of the Potomac, one of whose most distinguished and best-beloved officers he was; one whom, by the steady growth of the highest military qualities, the general voice of the whole army had marked out for the largest fame.

* This movement was led by the Second Wisconsin, under Colonel Fairchild, supported by the remainder of the Iron Brigade.

In thus engaging with the enemy, Reynolds has been charged with rashness in prematurely precipitating a battle. But wrongly; for rashness was not a fault of that officer, as all who know his character are well aware; and though he had no orders to bring on a general action (being, indeed, under instructions to fall back on the proposed line of Pipe Creek), he was necessarily drawn into this engagement in aid of Buford's hard-pressed cavalry. His real motives, whatever they were, remain buried with him: but it is more than probable that, in hastening forward the head of his column to the plain beyond the town, his quick military eye had taken in at a glance the figure of that rocky bulwark around Gettysburg as a vantage point where the army could most favorably receive battle, and in going out to oppose a front of resistance to the near-approaching enemy, and allow the army time to concentrate at Gettysburg, he knew he was doing what General Meade, who reposed the highest confidence in his judgment, would quite approve.

While these events were passing on the left of Wadsworth's force, the retirement of Cutler's right left Hall's battery unsupported; and it was in imminent peril of capture, when the Fourteenth Brooklyn and the Ninety-fifth New York, joined by the Sixth Wisconsin, under Lieutenant-Colonel Dawes, made a change of front, and charged to the relief of the guns. This manœuvre was so well managed that Davis's two Mississippi regiments, having sought shelter in the railroad cut, were there surrounded and compelled to surrender with their battle-flags. Upon this, that part of Cutler's command that had previously fallen back, having in the mean time been reformed, returned and united with the three regiments engaged in this spirited affair, when the force was moved still further to the right to meet the extension of the enemy's lines in that direction.

By the time these initial successes were gained, the combat, bursting out anew, was increased in volume by the arrival of fresh forces on each side. On the Union side, the two remaining divisions of the First Corps, under Generals Row-

ley* and Robinson, reached the ground. The former division was immediately thrown in to sustain the now hard-pressed left, and was precipitated into close action. The men were in the highest spirits, as was shown by their behavior, and by one incident among others. One of the brigades of this division, under command of Colonel Roy Stone, had been assigned to a position where it came under a heavy artillery fire; and as the troops took their post, Colonel Stone remarked, "We have come to stay." This went quickly through the brigade, the men adopting it as a watchword—"*We have come to stay.*" And a very large part of them never left that ground.†

Meantime, Robinson's division remained for awhile in reserve on the Seminary Ridge; but almost simultaneously with the arrival of these re-enforcements, the advance division of Ewell's corps, under General Rodes, came in from the direction of Carlisle, and, swinging round under cover and unperceived, seized a position menacing the right of the Union line. This brought a heavy pressure to bear on that flank, held by Cutler's command, and to relieve it Robinson's division was moved forward from the Seminary. First, Baxter's brigade of this division took position on the right of Cutler, resting its right on the Mummasburg Road, and then, as the needs became more urgent, Baxter's command relieved Cutler, and the brigade of General Paul was brought up on Baxter's right. These troops opposed a vigorous resistance to Rodes' attack, and early in the action, by a skilful movement, captured three North Carolina regiments under General Iverson.

With this series of successes the combat opened; but it was destined soon to be beclouded by an untoward sequel. Thus far the action had been sustained on the Union side by the First Corps alone, and on the Confederate side by the advance

* This officer commanded Doubleday's division, the latter officer being, for the time, in command of the corps.

† Testimony of General Doubleday: Report on the Conduct of the War vol. i., p. 307.

divisions of the corps of Hill and Ewell. But new actors now appeared on the stage. Hill was re-enforced by another division under General Pender, and towards one o'clock the Eleventh Corps came up—General Howard having arrived some time before and by virtue of his rank assumed command of the field. General Howard left a division* in reserve on Cemetery Hill, and placed the divisions of Schurz† and Barlow to the right of the First Corps, on a prolongation of its general line, and covering the approaches to Gettysburg from the north and northwest. Almost simultaneously with the forming of the Eleventh Corps, a fresh division of Ewell's corps, under General Early, arrived from the direction of York and took position on Barlow's front.

It has been seen how, by fresh arrivals, the Union line was gradually extended, till now it made a wide curve of several miles around the west and north of the town. In this disposition of his troops General Howard fell into an error that has been common throughout the war—the error of attempting to cover too much ground, by which it comes about that these long lines are everywhere weak, and that in attempting to cover every thing one really covers nothing. It would have been a disposition much better suited to the nature of the ground had General Howard massed a heavy force of his newly arrived corps on the right of the First Corps, where the line ended in Robinson's division—sweeping the plain to the north by its fire, in place of attempting to hold the whole stretch by a line thinly drawn out.

This faulty placing of the force had a powerful influence on the result that followed; and taken in connection with another circumstance, accounts quite as much as the alleged misbehavior of some of the troops for the disastrous sequel. The circumstance to which I have made reference is this. When Rodes threw forward his division to connect with the left of Hill's troops, he secured a commanding position on an ele-

* Steinwehr's division.

† This division was, for the time being, under General Schimmelpfenig, Schurz commanding the corps.

vated ridge known as Oak Hill, situate between the Mummasburg and Carlisle roads. This position was the key-point of the entire field, and gave Rodes an advantageous point of attack on the centre of the line as now drawn; or rather, as the corps did not connect, on the right flank of the First Corps and the left flank of the Eleventh Corps. The effect of this was soon seen. It required but a slight pressure for Early to throw back the right division, under Barlow, who found it impossible to hold his command to their work, and who was himself left on the field severely wounded. And when, towards three o'clock, a general advance was made by the Confederates, Rodes speedily broke through the Union centre, carrying away the right of the First Corps and the left of the Eleventh, and, entering the interval between them, disrupted the whole line. The troops fell back in much disorder into Gettysburg. At the same time the right of the First Corps, giving way, also retreated to the town, where they became entangled with the disordered mass. Early, launching forward, captured above five thousand prisoners.* The left of the First alone drew back in some order, making a stand on Seminary Ridge until the artillery and ambulances had been withdrawn, and then fell back behind the town.

At the time the confused throng was pouring through Gettysburg, General Hancock arrived on the ground. He had not brought with him his tried Second Corps, but had ridden forward from Taneytown under orders from General Meade, on learning the death of Reynolds, to assume command and use discretionary power either to retain the force at Gettysburg, or retire it to the proposed line on Pipe Creek. General Hancock was instructed to examine the ground, and if he found the position under the circumstances a better one than that contemplated, he should so advise the commander, and the army would be ordered up. But on his arrival he found a more pressing duty forced upon him; for it was clear that

* Lee: Report of Gettysburg, MS.

if the flight of the shattered masses of the First and Eleventh corps was not stayed, a great disaster must follow. The sole nucleus of stability was presented by a single brigade of Steinwehr's division which General Howard, on arriving, had left in reserve on Cemetery Hill, and the cavalry of Buford, which, deployed on the plain to the left of the town, and in front of the ridge, presented a bold and firm front. Everywhere else was confusion, and the enemy coming on.

In such an emergency it is the personal qualities of the commander alone that tell. If, happily, there is in him that mysterious but potent magnetism that calms, subdues, and inspires, there results one of those sudden moral transformations that are among the marvels of the phenomena of battle. This quality Hancock possesses in a high degree, and his appearance soon restored order out of seemingly hopeless confusion—a confusion which Howard, an efficient officer, but of a rather negative nature, had not been able to quell. Nor, fortunately, could there be any question as to the right position to be taken up, for nature had already traced it out in a bold relief of rock. On the ridge of Gettysburg—the ridge Reynolds had mentally marked as he impetuously hurried forward to buffet the advancing enemy, and which, by the rich sacrifice of his life, he purchased for the possession of the army and for the possession of history forever—Hancock disposed the remnants of the two corps.

The Gettysburg ridge is an irregular, interrupted line of heights and hills running due south from the town of Gettysburg. At the town the ridge bends back, eastward and southward, in a crotchet formed by Cemetery and Culps' hills. The former is so called from the burying-place of the town situate thereon. It commands the positions available for the enemy on the north and northwest. The latter forming the right knob of the line is in rough and rocky ground, much wooded and very unfavorable to the use of artillery. Along its eastern base runs Rock Creek, one of the tributaries of the Monocacy. From Cemetery Hill the line runs southward for about three miles, in a well-defined ridge, which may

properly be termed Cemetery Ridge, and which terminates, at that distance, in a high, rocky, and wooded peak named Round Top, the less elevated portion near where the crest rises into Round Top being termed Little Round Top,* a rough and bald spur of the former. The broken character of the ground in front of the southern flank of the line renders it also unfavorable to the use of artillery. The general position is thus about four miles in extent; but while Cemetery and Culps' hills require the formation of a line of battle to face northward, the direction of Cemetery Ridge (north and south) causes the line to front westward. The crest, mainly in cultivated fields, but with occasional fringes of woods, has, throughout, a good slope to the rear, affording excellent cover for the reserves and trains. To the west, the ridge falls off in a cultivated and undulating valley, which it commands, and at the distance of a mile or less is a parallel crest which has already been marked as Seminary Ridge, and which the Confederates occupied during the succeeding battle. In the valley between these two ridges the ground rises into an intermediate swell of land, along which runs the Emmettsburg road.

Such was the ground destined to form the scene of the approaching shock of the two armies; and on which Hancock, assisted by Generals Howard, Warren, and Buford, now disposed his preliminary line of battle. Cemetery Hill was already partially held by Howard's troops. On the right of these, and occupying the important position of Culps' Hill, was placed Wadsworth's division of the First Corps, and his line completely commanded the approaches from the town of Gettysburg, now held by Ewell. The remaining two divisions of the First Corps under General Doubleday were posted on the left of the Eleventh, along Cemetery Ridge; and Geary's division of the Twelfth Corps (Slocum) just then arriving, was ordered by Hancock to the high ground on the left. Towards six o'clock, the remaining division of that Corps came up,

* This spur appears on the map of Colonel Batchelder, as Weed's Hill.

having been urgently summoned by General Howard during the afternoon. The command, thereupon, devolved on General Slocum; and Hancock, having ordered all the trains to the rear, so as not to interfere with any movement of troops that might be ordered, returned to headquarters at Taneytown, where General Meade still remained.

General Hancock reported that the position at Gettysburg was a very strong one, and advantageous for a defensive battle, having for its only disadvantage that it might be turned: in fact, Hancock's representations were such that General Meade instantly gave orders for the forward movement and concentration of all the corps on Gettysburg, and he advanced his headquarters to that point, reaching it at one o'clock of the morning of the 2d. The Third Corps (Sickles) had early in the day been summoned up by General Howard. Its van reached Gettysburg at sunset of the 1st, and was joined by the remainder of the corps during the night and following morning. The Second Corps, having only to make the march of thirteen miles from Taneytown, arrived in the vicinity when General Hancock was on his way back, and was by him placed in position two miles in rear of the town to cover the flank and communications. The Fifth Corps (Sykes), when ordered forward, was at Union Mills, distant twenty-three miles; but by a night-march might reach the ground early in the morning. The Sixth Corps, forming the right wing of the army as it moved, was furthest off, being at Manchester, thirty-six miles from Gettysburg; but the known character of General Sedgwick gave assurance that all the resources of skill and zeal would be employed to bring it up at the earliest possible moment.

The important action of Wednesday, opening with success, followed by repulse, and ending in the occupation of the ridge of Gettysburg, was, as has been seen, fought by only the advanced portion of the two armies: by the First and Eleventh corps on the Union side, and on the Confederate side by the divisions of Heth and Pender of Hill's corps, and the divisions of Early and Rodes of Ewell's corps. As it has been seen

that the columns of Hill and Longstreet moved from Chambersburg and Fayetteville towards Gettysburg on the morning of the 29th, and as the distance is not above twenty miles, it is evident that the march was conducted much more slowly than was usual with Lee, and this he attributes to his ignorance of the movements of his antagonist—an ignorance due to the absence of Stuart's cavalry, the vigilant eyes of the Confederate commander.*

From the exposition already given it will have appeared that by the encounter of Wednesday, the opposing armies were precipitated into general conflict sooner than the chief commanders on each side expected; but when Lee, on the one hand, and Meade, on the other, reached the front late at night, they found themselves by the events of the day already committed to battle, and rapid concentration at Gettysburg became imperative. Having shown Meade's dispositions to this end, it remains to add that Lee also sent urgent orders to his remaining divisions to hasten their march. Meantime, Ewell was instructed to carry Cemetery Hill if he found it practicable, but to avoid a general engagement until the arrival of the other divisions of the army. He decided to await the arrival of Johnston's division; but as that officer did not arrive till a late hour, and in the mean time it was found that

* The absence of Stuart happened in this manner: When Lee crossed the Potomac from the Shenandoah Valley, Stuart was left on the east side of the Blue Ridge, under instructions to harass Hooker as much as possible in crossing the Potomac, and then pass into Maryland, either east or west of the Blue Ridge, and take position on the right of the advancing column. This would have put him in his proper place to watch the Union cavalry thrown out on the left of the Army of the Potomac. Stuart, however, finding himself unable to impede the passage of the Potomac, advanced eastward as far as Fairfax Courthouse, and then crossed the Potomac at Seneca. But Hooker having crossed above, Stuart found the entire Union army interposed between him and Lee, so that he was compelled to make a wide detour on the exterior line: marching by way of Westminster, he advanced to Carlisle, but did not reach that point till the 1st of July, the day after Ewell had left for Gettysburg, to which point he was then immediately summoned by Lee, who had during all these movements been deprived of the important services of his cavalry.

the Union force had fully occupied the heights, it was resolved not to attack until the arrival of Longstreet, two of whose divisions, those of Hood and McLaws, had encamped within three miles of Gettysburg. Hill's remaining division under Anderson reached the ground soon after the close of the engagement.

Nevertheless, to neither of the opposing chiefs could the situation, as it presented itself on their arrival that night, be either encouraging or satisfactory. General Meade found affairs pressing to a culmination, and the rolls of the First and Eleventh corps showed as the result of an encounter which in its general relations was but a reconnoissance in force, the formidable loss of near ten thousand men! He did not know but that Lee had his whole force massed in front of him, while his own army was much scattered, and a part distant by a full day's march.* Yet the position seemed favorable, and above all it secured to him the advantage of the defensive, forcing upon his antagonist all the perils of attack.† Dropping at once, therefore, as now obsolete, all previous contingent plans looking to other lines of defence, he had the moment he learnt the nature of the position given orders for the rapid concentration of the whole army at Gettysburg.

To Lee, on the other hand, though the action of the 1st had been on the whole favorable, yet the situation in which he found himself was very different from what he desired. It must be borne in mind that Lee's sudden movement to the east side of the South Mountain range, just at the moment he was heading his columns to cross the Susquehanna and ad-

* The two corps furthest off were the Fifth and Sixth, the former of which was distant twenty-three, and the latter upwards of thirty miles.

† General Meade makes no secret of his strong desire, at the time, to secure the advantage of the defensive. "It was my desire," says he in his testimony before the War Committee (Report, p. 439), "to fight a defensive rather than an offensive battle, for the reason that I was satisfied my chances of success were greater in a defensive battle than in an offensive one; and I knew the momentous consequences dependent upon the result of that."

vance on Harrisburg, was solely prompted by the menace to his communications with the Potomac resulting from the manœuvres of his antagonist. It was, therefore, with the view of checking the latter that Lee threw his forces to the east side of the mountain: but in doing so, he was far from expecting or desiring to take upon himself the risk of a general battle, at a point so distant from his base. He was willing to do so only in case he should, by manœuvring, secure the advantage of the defensive, or some special opening for a blow, should his opponent make a false move. Indeed, in entering upon the campaign, General Lee expressly promised his corps-commanders that *he would not assume a tactical offensive*, but force his antagonist to attack him. Having, however, gotten a taste of blood in the considerable success of the first day, the Confederate commander seems to have lost that equipoise in which his faculties commonly moved, and he determined to give battle.*

In adopting this course he committed a grave error, as the event proved, and judging from a merely military point of view; but this is not the first case in which it has been seen that other considerations than those of a purely military order enter into the complex problem of war. General Lee states as his main motive for giving battle, the difficulty that would have been experienced in withdrawing through the mountains with his large trains—an excuse that can hardly be considered valid. A considerable part of the trains had not been advanced to the east of the mountains, and he could readily have withdrawn all under cover of his line of battle; and then retired his army by the same routes—the Cashtown and Fairfield roads—over which he ultimately retreated. Besides, there was open another and still bolder move. Longstreet, holding the right of the Confederate line,

* This, and subsequent revelations of the purposes and sentiments of Lee, I derive from General Longstreet, who, in a full and free conversation with the writer, after the close of the war, threw much light on the motives and conduct of Lee during this campaign.

had one flank securely posted on the Emmettsburg road, so that he was really between the Army of the Potomac and Washington; and by marching towards Frederick could undoubtedly have manœuvred Meade out of the Gettysburg position. This operation General Longstreet, who foreboded the worst from an attack on the army in position, and was anxious to hold General Lee to his promise, begged in vain to be allowed to execute.*

What really compelled Lee, contrary to his original intent and promise, to give battle, was the animus and inspiration of the invasion; for, to the end, such were the "exsufflicate and blown surmises" of the army, and such was the contempt of its opponent engendered by Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, that there was not in his ranks a barefoot soldier in tattered gray but believed Lee would lead him and the Confederate army into Baltimore and Washington, if not into Philadelphia and New York.† To have withdrawn, therefore, without a battle, though materially easy, was morally impossible; for to have recrossed the Potomac without a blow, and abandoned the invasion on which such towering hopes had been built, would have been a shock beyond endurance to his army and the South. Such were the causes that, under providential ordainment, resulted in the mighty shock of arms that hurled the invading force from the soil of the loyal States, and dealt the army of Lee a blow from which it never afterwards recovered. To the events of this action I now return.

By morning of the 2d of July the entire Union army, saving the corps of Sedgwick, had reached Gettysburg; and the whole Southern force, with the exception of Pickett's division of Longstreet's corps, had come up.

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* The officer named is my authority for this statement.

† Colonel Freemantle, of the British service, who was with the Confederate army during the battle of Gettysburg, thus testifies to this feeling: "The staff-officers (on the night of the 1st) spoke of the battle as a certainty; and the universal feeling in the army was one of profound contempt for an enemy whom they have beaten so constantly, and under so many disadvantages."—Three Months in the Confederate States, p. 256.

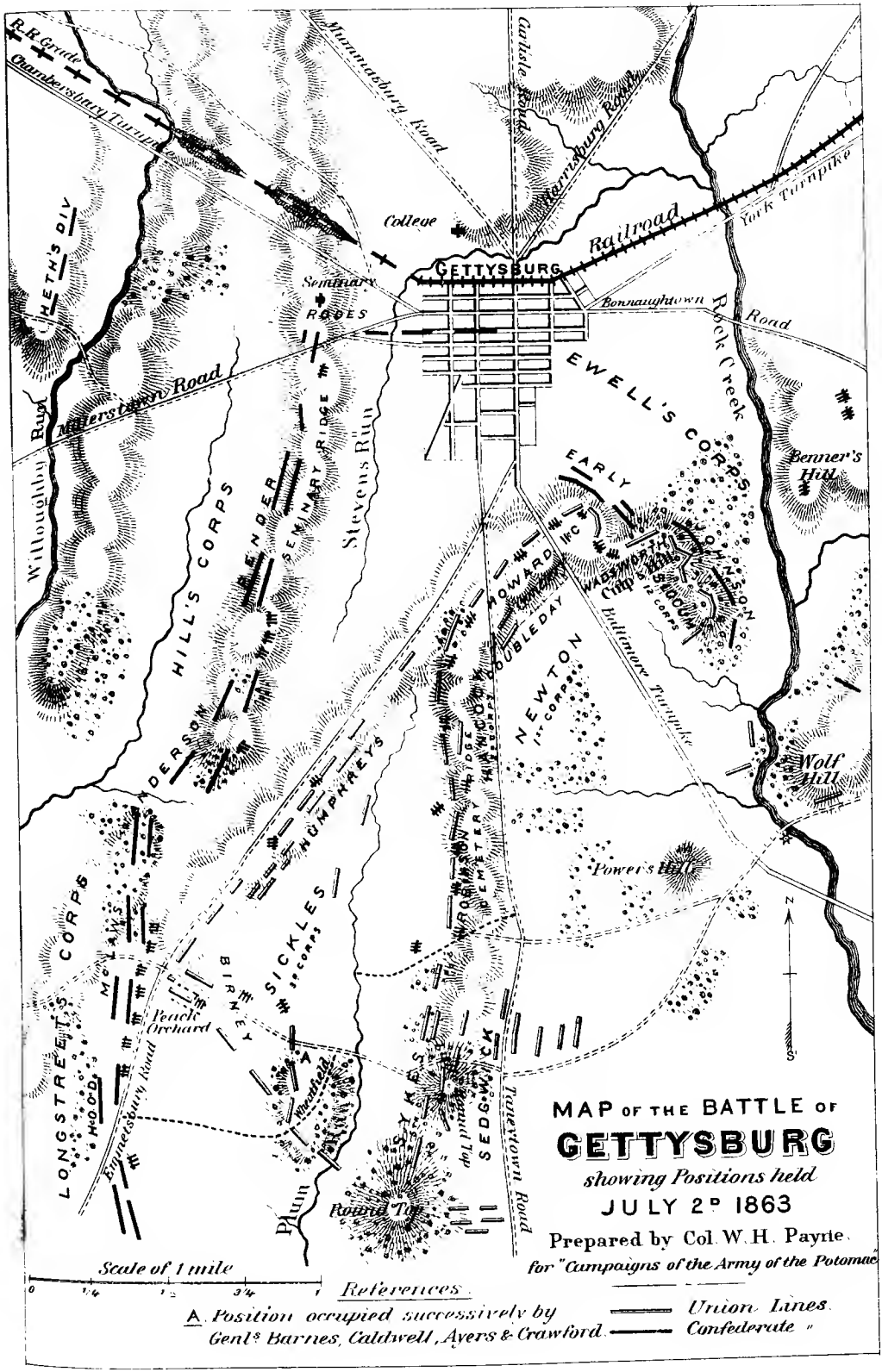
Meade, following the natural line of defence, disposed his forces as follows: The Eleventh Corps (Howard) retained its position on Cemetery Hill, where it was supported by Robinson's and Doubleday's divisions of the First Corps (Newton) on its right was placed Wadsworth's division of the same corps, which together with the Twelfth (Slocum) held the right of the whole army, on Culps' Hill; the Second (Hancock) and Third (Sickles) corps occupied the crest of Cemetery Ridge—the former connecting with the left of the Eleventh, and the latter (which formed the left of the line) connecting with the left of the Second. The Fifth Corps (Sykes) was held in reserve on the right.

Lee placed his troops along the Seminary Ridge, separated from the Cemetery Ridge by an interval of about a mile, and inclosing it with a wider curve. Longstreet, with the divisions of Hood and McLaws, held the right, facing Round Top and a good part of Cemetery Ridge, on which Sickles and Hancock were placed. Hill's three divisions continued the line from the left of Longstreet round the Seminary Ridge, and fronted, therefore, the remainder of Cemetery Ridge. Ewell, with his three divisions, held from the Seminary through the town; and sweeping round the base of Cemetery Hill, terminated the left of the hostile line in front of Culps' Hill, occupied by Slocum's corps, which formed the Union right. The Confederate line was about five miles in stretch, and was in great part well concealed by a fringe of woods. Both sides placed in position a powerful artillery force.

VII.

GETTYSBURG—THE SECOND DAY.

When morning revealed to Lee the position of the Union army drawn up on that ridge of rocks, he must have keenly realized all the perils of the attack; for upon a like position held by him at Fredericksburg he had seen the army under


MAP OF THE BATTLE OF
GETTYSBURG
showing Positions held
JULY 2D 1863
Prepared by Col. W. H. Payne.
for "Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac"
Scale of 1 mile
0
1/4
1/2
3/4
1
References.
A. Position occupied successively by
Genl's Barnes, Caldwell, Ayers & Crawford.
Union Lines.
Confederate "
GETTYSBURG
Railroad
College
Seminary
RODES
Bonnaughtown
Road
Rock Creek
York Turnpike
Harrisburg Road
Carlisle Road
Mummasburg Road
R.R. Grade
Chambersburg Turnpike
HETH'S DIV
Millerstown Road
Willoughby Run
Stevens Run
EWELL'S CORPS
EARLY
Benner's Hill
HILL'S CORPS
PENDER
SEMINARY RIDGE
HOWARD
WADSWORTH
JOHNSON
SLOCUM
12 CORPS
Cup's Hill
Baltimore Turnpike
DOUBLEDAY
NEWTON
1ST CORPS
HANCOCK
RIDGE
HUMPHREYS
ANDERSON
Wolf Hill
Powers Hill
ROSINSON
CEMETERY
SICKLES
3RD CORPS
BIRNEY
McLAWS
LONGSTREET'S CORPS
HOOD
Peach Orchard
Emmetsburg Road
Wheatfield
Plum Run
SYKES
SEDGWICK
Round Top
Tanevtown Road
N
S

Burnside dash itself to pieces, in high but impotent valor. But the excited condition of his army, in which he still shared, would not allow him to pause. He therefore proceeded with his dispositions for attack; yet it was four o'clock in the afternoon before these were completed. The Union troops, meanwhile, made good use of the time, and improvised for themselves cover behind breastworks and stone walls. Early in the morning, Ewell's deployment of his left around the base of Culps' Hill attracted attention, and raised the belief that the enemy would attack that point. General Meade therefore proposed to assume the initiative there, allowing General Slocum to attack with his own and two additional corps; but that officer having reported the ground very unfavorable, the purpose was given up.* About two o'clock the Sixth Corps, under General Sedgwick, arrived, having made a march of thirty-five miles in twenty hours. On the arrival of Sedgwick, General Meade directed Sykes' corps (Fifth), that had been in reserve on the right, to move over and be in reserve on the left.

The result of the Confederate reconnoissances was to fix upon the ground opposite Longstreet—that is, the left and left centre, held by Sickles' corps—as the most practicable point of attack. That portion of the Union front was placed in a very anomalous position; and this fact, which presently became the pivotal fact of the Confederate attack, was the result of a train of events that befell in this wise.

In the original ordainment of the line of battle, Sickles' corps (Third) had been instructed to take position on the left of Hancock, on the same general line, which would draw it along the prolongation of Cemetery Ridge towards the Round Top. Now, the ridge is, at this point, not very well defined,

* The attack was designed to be made by Slocum's own corps and the Fifth Corps, together with the Sixth, as soon as it should arrive. But at ten, orders were sent to attack without the Sixth Corps; and it was then that General Slocum reported adversely to it. General Warren, chief-engineer, who at the time went to examine the position, also reported an attack from the right unadvisable.—Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 438.

for the ground in front falls off into a considerable hollow. But at the distance of some four or five hundred yards in advance, it rises into that intermediate crest along which runs the Emmettsburg road. General Sickles, thinking it desirable to occupy this advanced position—which he conceived would, if held by the enemy, make his own ground untenable—assumed the responsibility of pushing his front forward to that point.

The motive that prompted General Sickles to this course was laudable enough, yet the step itself was faulty: for though to a superficial examination the aspect of this advanced position seems advantageous, it is not really so; and prolonged to the left, it is seen to be positively disadvantageous. It affords no resting-place for the left flank, which can be protected only by refusing that wing and throwing it back through low ground, towards Round Top; but this, in turn, presents the danger of exposing a salient in a position which, if carried, would give the enemy the key-point to the whole advanced line.*

* The point where two lines meet in an angle must always be weak for defence. This truth is recognized as one of the leading principles of the science of fortification, where the lines which meet in an angle are represented by ramparts or parapets, because there must always be a certain space, more or less great in proportion to the greater or smaller acuteness of the angle, which is undefended by the direct fire of the lines. The same applies to lines formed by troops, whose fire and general resistance can only be effective when they act perpendicular, or nearly so, to the direction of the lines. There is another mathematical truth which applies to the case of troops, and which is thus stated by Colonel MacDougall: "Where two lines representing mechanical forces meet in a point, the single line or force which is capable of counteracting them, called their *equivalent*, is always less than the sum of the two lines; and the direction of this equivalent is that of the diagonal produced of the parallelogram supposed to be formed on these two lines, by acting in a contrary sense." (MacDougall: Modern Warfare and Modern Artillery, p. 145) There is yet another serious evil attaching to an angle presented by a line on a field of battle—the enemy may place guns so as to enfilade one or both of the faces. When, therefore, circumstances render such a formation unavoidable, the angle should be covered by ground inaccessible to the enemy by nature or rendered so by art. But neither was this position taken up by General Sickles unavoidable, nor was it strengthened by artificial defences.

General Sickles' disposition of his troops had precisely this character, and was as follows: his right division, under General Humphreys, was thrown forward several hundred yards in advance of Hancock's left, and disposed along the Emmettsburg road. On Humphreys' left, the prolongation of the same line was continued to the left by Graham's brigade of Birney's division, as far as the "Peach Orchard," where, leaving the ridge, the remainder of Birney's division, made up of the brigades of De Trobriand and Ward, was refused, and stretched obliquely back through a low ground of woods, a wheat-field and woods, towards Round Top, in front of which, in a rocky ravine, the left flank rested. This brought the salient at the peach orchard, which was therefore the key-point of Sickles' rather weak line. On this obtruding member, Lee determined to make his attack; for, as he states, "it appeared that if the position held by it could be carried, its possession would give facilities for assailing and carrying the more elevated ground and crest beyond."

This eccentricity in the placing of Sickles' corps did not become known to General Meade until about four o'clock, when he arrived personally on that part of the field; and though he then saw the danger to which that corps exposed itself, it was thought to be too late to correct the error; for just at that moment, Longstreet, under cover of a powerful artillery fire, opened his attack, and all that remained for General Meade was to support Sickles as far as could be done in the emergency. Longstreet first advanced his right division under Hood, so that the attack fell upon that part of Sickles' corps which stretched back from the peach orchard to the Round Tops—that is, upon the brigades of De Trobriand and Ward; and while sharply assailing this front, Hood at the same time thrust his right unperceived between the extreme left of Sickles and Round Top. The extraordinary danger to which this menace exposed not merely the force of Sickles, but the whole army, will be obvious when it is remembered that the possession of this point would have taken the entire line in reverse. This result seemed at this

moment imminent, for Little Round Top was quite unoccupied. Had Hood known its nakedness, and, massing his whole division on the force that had outflanked Sickles' left, pushed boldly for its rocky summit, he would have grasped in his hand the key of the battle-ground, and Gettysburg might have been one of those fields that decide the issues of wars.

Fortunately, at the time Hood made his attack, General Warren, chief-engineer, happened to reach Little Round Top. The summit of this hill had been used as a signal station, and at the moment of his arrival, the signal-officers suddenly seeing that the enemy had penetrated between Round Top and the left of Sickles' line and was approaching their position, were folding up their flags to leave; but Warren, commanding them to continue waving them, so as to make at least a show on the hill, hastened to seek some force wherewith to occupy this important point. It happened at this pregnant moment that the head of Sykes' column, which had been ordered over to the left, reached this vicinity, and the leading division of this corps, under General Barnes, was then passing out to re-enforce Sickles. General Warren assumed the responsibility of detaching from this force the brigade of Vincent, and this he hurried up to hold the position, while Hazlitt's battery was by enormous labor dragged and lifted by hand up the rocky brow of the hill and planted on its summit. As these events followed in quick succession, it resulted that while that part of Hood's force that had penetrated to the left of the line was approaching the front slope of the Little Round Top, which in a few moments would have been seized by it, other claimants were hurrying up its rear. Vincent's men, thrown forward at the *pas de course*, and without time to load, reached the crest just as Hood's Texans, advancing in column and without skirmishers, were running to gain it.

Little Round Top—the prize so eagerly coveted by both combatants—is a bold and rocky spur of the lofty and peaked hill Round Top. It is impossible to conceive a scene of greater wildness and desolation than is presented by

its bare and mottled figure, up-piled with granite ledges and masses of rock, and strewn with mighty boulders, that might be the debris of some antique combat of the Titans.

Here there ensued one of those mortal struggles rare in war, when the hostile forces, clenching in close contest, illustrate whatever there is of savage and terrible in battle. Vincent's brigade, composed of the Sixteenth Michigan (Lieutenant-Colonel Welsh), the Forty-fourth New York (Colonel Rice), the Eighty-third Pennsylvania (Captain Woodward), and the Twentieth Maine (Colonel Chamberlain), coming quickly into position, engaged Hood's troops in a hand-to-hand conflict, in which bayonets were crossed and muskets clubbed; and officers, seizing the rifles dropped from dead hands, joined in the fray. After half an hour of this desperate work, the position was secured. Meantime, Weed's brigade of Ayres' division of the Fifth Corps* took post on Vincent's right on Little Round Top. Hood's men, however, clung fast to the rocky glen at the base of the hill, and working their way up the ravine between the Round Tops, succeeded in turning the left flank. The ammunition of Vincent's troops was already exhausted. It therefore became necessary to use the steel, and the enemy was driven from this point by a charge with the bayonet by Colonel Chamberlain's Maine Regiment. Yet this rocky bulwark was not secured without a heavy sacrifice. Colonel Vincent, who had so heroically met the first shock, laid down his life in defence of the position; O'Rourke and the much-beloved General Weed were killed; Hazlitt, who commanded the battery, also fell at his perilous post;† and among the ledges of rocks lay many hundred dead soldiers in blue.‡

* The One Hundred and Fortieth New York, of this brigade, had gone up simultaneously with Hazlitt's battery, and participated in the engagement.

† Hazlitt was bending over the prostrate form of his commander, General Weed, and receiving his last words and sighs, when a bullet threw him prone and inanimate on the body of his comrade in glory and in death.

‡ Towards dark, after Chamberlain's charge, Fisher's brigade of the Pennsylvania Reserves re-enforced Vincent's troops; and later at night Chamberlain's regiment, supported by two of Fisher's regiments, occupied Round Top proper

It has been seen that, at the same time Hood thrust his right through the interval between Sickles' left flank and Round Top, and entered upon the contest for the possession of that point, he also assailed the portion of the Third Corps line held by Birney's division. In this attack he was joined by Longstreet's other division under General McLaws, so that this effort was directed against the entire left and centre of the Third Corps, from its left flank near Round Top, forward to the salient in the peach orchard on the Emmettsburg road. But it happened that Longstreet's line as formed did not cover the entire front of Sickles' corps (for Hood's point of attack was quite to the Confederate right, and Longstreet had only McLaws' division in addition), and it failed to cover it by about the front held by the right division under General Humphreys. Where Longstreet's line terminated, however, the prolongation towards the Union right was continued by Hill's corps, so that Humphreys had part of that corps in his front. But Hill's duty was, while Longstreet attacked, to make demonstrations and only assault in case of a good opportunity. Thus it came about, that, when Longstreet, after the development of Hood's attack, advanced McLaws' division on the left of Hood, the brunt of the assault fell upon Sickles' centre and left under Birney; Humphreys' division being for the time unassailed.

The onset of Hood and McLaws upon Birney's front was made with great vigor, compelling General Sickles immediately to call for re-enforcements; and it was in response to this request that General Barnes' division of the Fifth Corps had been thrown out in support at the time General Warren detached from this division the brigade of Vincent to hold Little Round Top. Its other two brigades, under Colonels Tilton and Sweitzer, hastened to the support of Birney's hard-pressed troops on the advanced line; and General Humphreys, who held the right of the Third Corps, but had not yet been attacked, sent one of his own brigades under Colonel Burling to still further help.

The heaviest pressure of the hostile attack fell upon that

exposed portion of the line where it made an angle at the peach orchard, and this point of Sickles line was held by eight regiments belonging to Birney's and Humphrey's divisions. The assault was made by McLaws' left, supported by Anderson's division; and though it was disputed by the Union regiments with very great stubbornness, the position was at length carried, and the key-point remained in the enemy's hands.

Now certainly, if not before, was seen the faultiness of the advanced line; for the enemy having burst through the centre, was free to penetrate the interval and assail in detail the disrupted forces right and left. To meet this menace, that portion of the line which was to the right of the peach orchard—that is, Humphreys' division and Graham's brigade—swung back its exposed left, thus making a change of front to face southward instead of westward, and the batteries on the forward crest under Major McGilvray were retired firing. That portion of the line which was to the left of the peach orchard—namely, the brigades of Tilton and Sweitzer, that had been sent out to re-enforce Birney—being now not only assailed in front but having its right flank exposed, fell back; and this also involved Birney's front.

It is rare that a field of battle displays, in a more striking manner than was here presented, the influence of key-points in determining tactical results. The possession of the peach orchard enabled the enemy to meet and repulse a succession of attacks, and the history of the action on the left presents an extraordinary series of efforts to maintain ground now become untenable—one re-enforcement after another being thrown forward only to be driven back in a whirling vortex of advancing and retiring lines.

The original front of Birney had already gone out and disappeared, and Barnes' two brigades sent forward in support had been repulsed. Hereupon Caldwell's division was detached from Hancock's front and ordered in to check the hostile advance. The disputed ground had come to be an intermediate position of woods and wheat-field between Sickles' lost

front and the Round Tops, in the rear now securely held. Caldwell advanced with his left skirting Little Round Top, and pushing forward into the wheat-field engaged the enemy with the brigades of Cross and Kelly This line was much cut up, and Colonel E. E. Cross, of the Fifth New Hampshire (commanding the First brigade), whose intrepid bearing had so often been exhibited on the field of battle, was killed. To relieve these troops, General Caldwell then advanced his second line, made up of the brigades of Brooke and Zook. The latter was mortally wounded while carrying his troops into action. Brooke led his command forward with much gallantry, and after an exceedingly stubborn fight, drove the enemy from under cover of the woods, and from a position of great natural strength along the rocky bottom of a creek at its margin.* But this success, notwithstanding that Sweitzer's brigade was again advanced to assist the attack, was temporary. Hood had already carried the whole of the position originally held by the left of the Third Corps; and to hold him in check at that point, General Ayres, with two brigades of the Regulars of the Fifth Corps, moved forward. Caldwell experienced the same fate as those that had gone before; for the Confederates, penetrating the wide interval made by the disruption of Sickles' centre at the peach orchard, enveloped his right, and penetrated almost to his rear. This quickly forced Caldwell back, after the frightful sacrifice of one-half his division. Then the enemy, breaking out through the woods on the right, hurled Sweitzer back; and the division of Regulars, under General Ayres, being struck on its right and rear, fought its way with great gallantry and heavy loss through the enemy to its original line of battle. I shall leave now the recital of the manner in which he was finally checked, and take up the thread of events on the right of the Third Corps, where Humphreys yet clung with one of his flanks to his advanced position.

It has been seen that when Sickles' line was cut in twain by

* Colonel Brooke was wounded in this action.

the carrying of the peach orchard, Humphreys, joined by the brigade of Graham, swung back his left so as to make a change of front, and with his right still held on to the crest on the Emmettsburg road. For a considerable time, while the contest raged to his left, he was not assailed, and the enemy only made demonstrations of attack; but when finally the whole left and the troops that had moved to its support were thrown back, the hostile force poured through the interval and advanced to strike Humphreys, whose left was greatly exposed, and whose right was thrown much out of position. To support that flank, General Hancock sent forward two regiments from Gibbon's division (the Fifteenth Massachusetts, under Colonel Ward, and the Eighty-second New York, under Colonel Huston), and to cover the gap on the left, he detached Willard's brigade from Hays' division;* but at this moment Hill, converting his demonstrations into a real attack, pressed upon Humphreys, who was forced to fall back. In the midst of this action General Sickles was severely wounded, losing a leg. General Hancock hereupon took direction of the Third Corps (now under General Birney) ir addition to his own.

The attack on Humphreys was so sudden and severe, that two additional regiments (the Nineteenth Massachusetts, under Colonel Devereux, and the Forty-second New York, under Colonel Mallon), which Hancock had sent out to his assistance, finding that Humphreys was retiring, could only get quickly into line of battle, deliver a few volleys at the advancing enemy, and then retire with a considerable loss. The enemy pushed them so closely that a number of the Confederates, eagerly pressing forward, fell prisoners into the hands of those they were pursuing. Humphreys, in retiring his men, which he refrained from doing until not only pressed upon by the enemy, but until ordered back, felt the importance of yielding stubbornly and slowly; for under the circumstances, he judged that if a rapid backward movement were

* Colonel Willard was killed in this action.

made, it would be difficult to rally the men upon the new line. Yet this imposed obstinacy cost the terrible sacrifice of half his small division. What of its remains was collected on the original line was the debris of many regiments—hardly more than an ordinary battalion, though with many colors.* Three guns of one of its batteries had been left on the field, owing to its heavy losses in horses and cannoniers. And now the enemy began to surge against the base of the crest, and it became urgently necessary to form a bulwark of men to resist his oncoming. This was not an easy task, for the action, as it rolled on, had fully involved Sykes' corps on the left, and a large part of the Second Corps had been thrown in to aid the Third at different points, and was shockingly cut up.

With all that could be done the front was still only *patched*, and wherever the head of a column could be thrust through, the enemy was quick to do so. Thus Hancock, in riding along the line, suddenly met a force of the enemy, which having, unobserved, approached very close to the line, under cover of a fringe of undergrowth, was about to pass through an unprotected interval. Opportunely, the First Minnesota Regiment came up at this moment, and, making an exceedingly spirited charge, drove it back in disorder, capturing its colors. The line being, however, still incomplete, Stannard's brigade was brought up, and General Meade led forward in person a part of the Twelfth Corps, consisting of two regiments of Lockwood's Maryland brigade, which were placed further to the left. This was enough, for the enemy's efforts were now little more than the frantic sallies of an exhausted wrestler. A terrible price had been exacted for the success he had won: General Barksdale, the impetuous leader of the boldest attack, was mortally hurt, and lay within the Union lines, and many other Confederate officers were killed and wounded. When, therefore, Hancock ordered a counter-charge, the enemy easily gave way. This was made by the portions of the different corps that had come up to the assistance; and Hum-

* Hancock: Report of Gettysburg.

phreys' little band joined in, and had the satisfaction to retake and bring back its lost guns. A new line was then formed by Doubleday's and Robinson's divisions of the First Corps, and by troops from the Twelfth Corps, brought up by General Williams.*

Thus, at dusk, ended the action on the left centre, and at the same time the complicated action on the left, whose ebb and flow I have already described, was brought to a close. It has been seen how line after line was swept back, and how the enemy, following on the heels of the troops of Ayres last engaged, debouched from the woods in front of Little Round Top. Thus far, the success of Longstreet had indeed been considerable; but it had no decisive character, and until this crest and spur should be carried, he could claim no substantial victory; for the position wrested from Sickles was one intrinsically false, and though the successive attacks of Barnes and Caldwell and Ayres had been repulsed, yet the advantage was gained at a heavy cost to the Confederates. When, therefore, debouching from the woods, they suddenly saw across a narrow swale the beetling sides of Little Round Top crowned with troops and artillery, and the figure of a battle array defined on the bold crest to the right,† their line was visibly shaken. At this moment six regiments of the division of Pennsylvania Reserves, moving down the ridge, rapidly advanced under the personal leadership of General Crawford. This sally was enough to determine the action; for seeing attack to be hopeless, and in turn assailed themselves, the Confederates, after a sharp but brief contest for the retention of a stone wall occupied by them, hastily recoiled to the woods beyond the wheat-field, the opposite margins of which were that night held by the combatants.

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* It had been intended that Geary's division (with the exception of Greene's brigade) should also re-enforce the left; but this division missed its way. General Williams was temporarily in command of the Twelfth Corps, Slocum having charge of the whole right wing.

† Bartlett's and Wheaton's brigades, of the Sixth Corps, had just taken position on this crest.

Such was the main current of the action as it fell on the left and left centre of the army, and it was fought by Longstreet's corps and a part of Anderson's division of Hill's corps. Now the plan of battle contemplated that, while Longstreet attacked, Ewell should make vigorous demonstrations against the forces on Cemetery and Culp's hills, to prevent re-enforcements being drawn from that flank to increase the opposition to be encountered in the real assault against the Union left. For some reason, however, Ewell's demonstrations were much delayed, and it was sunset before he got to work. Then, opening up with a fire of artillery from a knoll in front of Cemetery Hill, he followed it by a powerful infantry attack with the divisions of Early and Johnson—the former on Cemetery Hill, the latter on Culp's Hill. As Early's columns defiled from the town, they came under the fire of Stevens' battery at eight hundred yards; but, wheeling into line, they pushed up the hill, and as their front became unmasked, all the guns that could be brought to bear upon them (some twenty in number), were opened upon them, first with shrapnel, then with canister, and with excellent effect, for their left and centre were beaten back. But the right, working its way up under cover of the houses and undulating ground, pushed completely through Wiedrich's battery into Ricketts' battery. The cannoniers of both batteries stood well to their guns, and when no longer able to hold them, fought with handspikes, rammers, and even stones.* Howard's troops were considerably shaken by the assault; but the firmness of the artillery and the opportune arrival of Carroll's brigade of the Second Corps, voluntarily sent by General Hancock on hearing the firing, repulsed the attack and saved the day †

But Ewell's efforts did not end here; for at the same time this attack was made, he threw his left division, under General Johnson, up the ravine formed by Rock Creek, and

* Hunt: Report of Artillery at Gettysburg.

† "Ewell had directed Rodes' division to attack in concert with Early, covering his right. When the time came to attack, Rodes not having his troops in position, was unprepared to co-operate with Early."—Lee's Report, MS.

struck the extreme right of the Union position on Culp's Hill. If Ewell's delay had thwarted the original intention of preventing re-enforcements being sent from the right to buffet Longstreet's attack, it at least gave him the opportunity to make his demonstration, when at length made, really effective; for such heavy detachments had been taken from the Twelfth Corps to re-enforce the left during the operations of the afternoon, that there remained of this corps but a single brigade, under General Greene, drawn out in a thin line, with the division of Wadsworth on its left. The brunt of the attack fell upon Greene, who, re-enforced by parts of Wadsworth's troops, maintained his own position with great firmness, but Ewell's left penetrated without opposition the vacated breastworks on the furthest right, and this foothold within the Union lines he held during the night.

Thus closed the second day's action, and the result was such that the Confederate commander, believing he would be able ultimately to carry the position, resolved to renew attack on the morrow. It must be admitted that the events of the day seemed to justify this belief. Longstreet had carried the whole front on which the Third Corps had been drawn; Ewell's left was thrust within the breastworks on the right, in a position which, if held by him, would enable him to take Meade's entire line in reverse, and the Union loss in the two days' combat had already reached the frightful aggregate of upwards of twenty thousand men. But Lee's inference, though specious, was unwarranted. The position carried from Sickles at such costly price to the assailants was no part of the real line as drawn on the crest of hills south of Gettysburg. This, intact throughout, remained yet to be assailed; and such was the confidence felt by the corps-commanders in their ability to maintain this position, that notwithstanding the partial reverses of the day, and the heavy loss sustained, when they came together that night there was a unanimous determination to fight it out at Gettysburg—a sentiment which was quite in accord with General Meade's own conviction.

VIII.

GETTYSBURG—THE THIRD DAY.

Lee's plan of attack of the previous day had been directed against both flanks of the Union position, but, as I have shown, though the whole of the advanced line on the left had been carried, this only brought Longstreet abreast a more formidable front drawn on the original line. Ewell, however, still maintained his foothold within the breastworks on Culp's Hill; and this lodgment inside of the works on the right shaped the determination of the first plan of attack for the third day "General Ewell," says Lee, "had carried some of the strong positions which he assailed, and the result was such as to lead to the belief that he would ultimately be able to dislodge the enemy."*

With this view, Johnson's force, hugging closely Culps' Hill, was considerably strengthened; but before preparations could be made for an attack, Meade assumed the offensive and drove back the intrusive force. During the night a powerful artillery was accumulated against the point entered by the enemy, and at four o'clock opened a heavy fire. Meanwhile, the troops of the Twelfth Corps returned from the left, and the divisions of Williams and Geary, aided by Shaler's brigade of the Sixth Corps, entered upon a severe struggle to regain the lost portion of the line. After four hours' close contest, it was carried by a charge of Geary's division, the original line on Culp's Hill was re-established and the right flank made secure. Being thus thwarted in his plan of attack on the right—a plan which, besides, would have been difficult of execution, owing to the wide separation of the Confederate wings—General Lee altered his determination and resolved to assault the centre of the Union position. In this he seems to have aimed to imitate Wagram.

* Lee Report of Gettysburg.

That some weighty design was in preparation by the enemy was throughout the morning evident; for after the struggle had ceased on the right there was for some hours a deep silence. During all this time the Confederates were placing in position heavy masses of artillery. Lee, less sanguine than the day before, knew well that his only hope lay in his ability, first of all, to sweep resistance from the slopes before the assaulting columns moved forward. By noon a hundred and forty-five guns were in position along the ridge occupied by Longstreet and Hill. At one o'clock the ominous silence was broken by a terrific outburst from this massive concentration of the enginery of war. Ample means for a reply in kind were at hand; for General Hunt, the chief of artillery, had crowned the ridge along the left and left centre, on which it was manifest the attack was to fall, with eighty guns—a number not as great as that of the enemy, but it was all that could be made effective in the more restricted space occupied by the army * Withholding the fire until the first hostile outburst had spent itself, General Hunt then ordered the batteries to open; and thus from ridge to ridge was kept up for near two hours a Titanic combat of artillery that caused the solid fabric of the hills to labor and shake, and filled the air with fire and smoke and the mad clamor of two hundred guns. During this outburst the troops crouched behind such slight cover as they could find; but the musket was tightly grasped, for each man knew well what was to follow—knew that this storm was but the prelude to a less noisy, yet more deadly shock of infantry. When, therefore, after the duel had

* In the cemetery were placed Dilger's, Bancroft's, Eakin's, Wheeler's, Hill's, and Taft's batteries, under Major Osborne. On the left of the cemetery the batteries of the Second Corps, under Captain Hazard—namely, those of Woodruff, Arnold, Cushing, Brown, and Rorty. Next on the left was Thomas's battery, and on his left Major McGilvray's command, consisting of Thompson's, Phillips', Hart's, Sterling's, Ranks', Dow's, and Ames' of the reserve artillery, to which was added Cooper's battery of the First Corps. On the extreme left, Gibbs' and Rittenhouse's (late Hazlitt's) batteries. As batteries expended their ammunition, they were replaced by batteries of the artillery reserve, sent forward by its efficient chief, Colonel R. O. Tyler.

continued for near two hours, the chief of artillery, finding his ammunition running low,* and that it was unsafe to bring up loads of it from the rear (for many caissons and limbers had been exploded), directed that the firing should be gradually stopped: the enemy also slackened fire, and immediately the Confederate columns of attack were seen forming on the edge of the woods that cover the Seminary Ridge.

As Pickett's division of Longstreet's corps had reached the ground during the morning, and as Longstreet wished to use the divisions of Hood and McLaws in covering his right, it was appointed to lead the van.† Pickett formed his division in double line of battle, with Kemper's and Garnett's brigades in front and Armistead's brigade supporting; while on the right of Pickett was one brigade of Hill's corps, under General Wilcox, formed in column by battalions; and on his left, Heth's division (also of Hill's corps), under General Pettigrew. The attacking force numbered about fifteen thousand men, and it advanced over the intervening space of near a mile in such compact and imposing order, that, whether friend or foe, none who saw it could refrain from admiration of its magnificent array. The hostile line, as it advanced, covered a front of not more than two of the reduced and incomplete divisions of the Second Corps, numbering, it may be, some six thousand men. While crossing the plain, it received a severe fire of artillery, which, however, did not delay for a moment its determined advance; so that the column pressing on, came within musketry range—the troops evincing a striking disposition to withhold their fire until it could be delivered with deadly effect. The first opposition it received was from two regiments of Stannard's Vermont

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* Report of Artillery Operations.

† The absence of Pickett's division the day before made General Longstreet very loth to make the attack, but Lee, thinking the Union force was not all up, would not wait. Longstreet urged in reply that this advantage (or *supposed* advantage, for the Union force *was* all up) was countervailed by the fact that *he* was not all up either: but the Confederate commander was not minded to delay. My authority is again General Longstreet.

brigade of the First Corps, which had been posted in a small grove to the left of the Second Corps in front of and at a considerable angle with the main line. These regiments opened upon the right flank of the enemy's advancing lines, which received also an oblique fire from eight batteries under Major McGilvray. This caused the Confederate troops on that flank to double in a little towards their left, but it did not stay their onward progress. As, during the passage of the enemy across the intervening plain, the rifled guns had fired away all their canister, they were withdrawn or left on the ground inactive, to await the issue of the impending shock between the two masses of infantry—a shock momentarily expected, for the assailants approached steadily, while the Union force held itself braced to receive the impact. When at length the hostile lines had approached to between two and three hundred yards, the divisions of Hays and Gibbon of the Second Corps opened a destructive fire, and repeated it in rapid succession.

This sally had the effect to instantly reveal the unequal metal of the assaulting mass, and proved what of it was iron and what clay. It happened that the division on the left of Pickett, under command of General Pettigrew, was, in considerable part, made up of North Carolina troops comparatively green. To animate them, they had been told that they would meet only the Pennsylvania militia. But when, approaching the slope, they received the *feu d'enfer* from Hays' line, there ran through their ranks a cry, the effect of which was like to that which thrilled a Greek army when it was said that the god Pan was among them—"The Army of the Potomac!"

Thus suddenly undeceived in regard to their opponents, Pettigrew's troops broke in disorder, leaving two thousand prisoners and fifteen colors in the hands of Hays' division. Now, as Wilcox's brigade had not advanced, Pickett's division remained alone a solid lance-head of Virginia troops, tempered in the fire of battle. Solitary, this division, buffeting the fierce volleys that met it, rushed up the crest of Cemetery Ridge, and such was the momentum of its assault that it fairly thrust itself within Hancock's line.

It happened that the full strength of this attack fell upon Webb's brigade of three regiments. This brigade had been disposed in two lines: two of its regiments, the Sixty-ninth and Seventy-first Pennsylvania, posted behind a low stone wall and slight breastwork hastily constructed by them, while the remaining regiment (the Seventy-second Pennsylvania) lay behind the crest some sixty paces to the rear, and so placed as to fire over the heads of those in front. When the swift advancing and yelling array of Pickett's force had, notwithstanding the volleys it met, approached close up to the stone wall, many of those behind it seeing their fire to be now vain, abandoned the position; and the Confederates, detecting this wavering, rushed over the breastworks, General Armistead leading, and crowned the stone wall with their standards. The moment was certainly as critical as can well be conceived; but happily, the regiments that had been holding the front line did not, on falling back, do so in panic: so that by the personal bravery of General Webb and his officers, they were immediately rallied and reformed on the remainder of the brigade, which held the second line behind the crest, and Hancock, who had the day before turned the fortunes of the battle in a similar emergency, again displayed those qualities of cool appreciation and quick action that had proved him one of the foremost commanders on the actual field of battle, and instantly drew together troops to make a bulwark against any further advance of the now exultant enemy.

As the hostile front of attack was quite narrow, it left Hancock's left wing unassailed. From there he drew over the brigades of Hall and Harrow;* and Colonel Devereux, commanding the Nineteenth Massachusetts Regiment, anxious to be in the right place, applied for permission to move his regiment to the front—a request gladly granted by Hancock,

* One Hundred and Fifty-first Pennsylvania and Twentieth New York State Militia, both under Gates of Doubleday's division, First Corps, participated.

who also gave Mallon's Forty-second New York Regiment the same direction; while Colonel Stannard moved two regiments of his Vermont brigade to strike the enemy on the right flank. These movements were quickly executed, but not without confusion, owing to many men leaving their ranks to fire at the enemy from the breastworks. When the new line was formed, it was found that the situation was very peculiar; for the men of all brigades, while individually firm, had in some measure lost their regimental organization—a confusion that arose from the honorable ambition of individual commanders to promptly cover the point penetrated by the enemy. The essential thing was secured, however—the breach was covered, and in such force that, in regular formation, the line would have stood four ranks deep.

It will be remembered that the brigade of Stannard held an advanced point on Hancock's left. As the assaulting column passed his right to strike Webb, he moved to the right, changed front forward, and opened a very savage fire on the enemy's flank. At the same time, the colors of the different regiments were advanced in defiance of the long line of battle-flags presented by the Confederates, and the men pressing firmly after them engaged in a brief and determined combat and utterly overthrew the foe. Whatsoever valor could do to wrest victory from the jaws of hell, that it must be conceded the troops of Pickett had done; but now, seeing themselves in a desperate strait, they flung themselves on the ground to escape the hot fire and threw up their hands in token of surrender, while the remnant sought safety in flight. Twenty-five hundred prisoners and twelve battle-flags were taken at this point, which brought the aggregate of Hancock's captures up to four thousand five hundred prisoners and twenty-seven standards. The Confederate loss in killed and wounded was exceedingly severe. Of the three brigade commanders of Pickett's division, Garnett was killed, Armistead fell fatally wounded within the Union lines, and Kemper was borne off severely hurt. In addition, it left behind fourteen of its field-officers, and only a single one of that rank

escaped unhurt, while of its rank and file three-fourths were dead or captives. Pettigrew's division, also, though it had faltered earlier, was much cut up and lost many officers, besides heavily in killed, wounded, and prisoners. But this illustrious victory was not purchased without severe price paid; and this was sadly attested in the thousands of dead and wounded that lay on the plain. The loss in officers was again especially heavy; and among the wounded were Generals Gibbon and Hancock; but the latter did not leave the field till he learned the tidings of the discomfiture of the enemy.

After the repulse of Pickett's assault, Wilcox's command, that had been on the right but failed to move forward, advanced by itself to the attack, and came to within a few hundred yards of Hancock's line; but in passing over the plain it met severe artillery fire, and Stannard detached a force* which took it in flank and rear, capturing several hundred prisoners: the rest fled.† This ended the combat, though towards dusk General Crawford advanced across the wheat-field into the woods and took several hundred prisoners and a large number of arms. During the action, the cavalry had been operating on the flanks, Kilpatrick's division on the left, and Gregg's division on the right. Both divisions displayed much gallantry and suffered heavy loss.‡

When the shattered columns of attack returned to their

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* The Sixteenth Vermont, supported by a detachment of the Fourteenth Vermont.

† It had not been designed that Wilcox should attack, but simply cover, the right flank of Pickett's assaulting column. But he did not move forward with sufficient promptness to effect the former purpose, and when Pickett had been repulsed, he made a foolish and isolated attack. Thus, in the first instance, he did not move forward enough, and in the second he moved too far.

‡ The scope of this work does not permit the recital of the details of the numerous cavalry affairs; but I cannot forbear to mention the very spirited attack on Hood's right by the brigades of Farnesworth and Merritt, operating on the left flank of the army. Farnesworth, with the First Vermont and First Virginia Cavalry, cleared a fence in his front, sabred the enemy behind it, and then rushed on the second line and up to the muzzles of the guns, where most of them fell, and their gallant leader at their head.

lines on Seminary Ridge, it was clear to Lee that the attempt to break through the Union position was hopeless. The troops went back much disrupted, and it was only by the energetic, personal exertions of Longstreet and of Lee that they were rallied and re-formed. It is said that a counter-attack by the Union forces was much feared at this moment; and it is possible that had General Meade been aware of the extent of the damage he had inflicted on his opponent, and the extreme disorder of the moment, as also that the Confederate ammunition had run very low, an immediate advance by the left might have converted the repulse into a rout. But it must be borne in mind that he did not then know these things, and all he did know favored a cautious policy. For his own loss was terrible, the different corps were much intermingled, and to have quitted his defences would have exposed him to a repulse similar to that the enemy had just received; and as —with the exception of a few brigades of Sedgwick's corps— there were no reserves, attack must have been made by already exhausted troops.*

With Lee there now remained only the alternative of re-

* So far as I am aware, the only important witness on the Confederate side in favor of attack at this time, is Colonel Fremantle of the British service. Referring to the situation after Pickett's repulse, he says: "It is difficult to exaggerate the critical state of affairs as they appeared about this time. If the enemy, or their general, had shown any enterprise, there is no saying what might have happened. General Lee and his officers were evidently fully impressed with a sense of the situation." But the sequel seems to belie this; for he immediately remarks: "Yet there was much less noise, fuss, or confusion of orders than at an ordinary field-day; the men as they were rallied in the woods, were brought up in detachments, and lay down quietly and coolly in the positions assigned them."—Three Months in the Confederate States, pp. 269–270. A very different view of the probable success of an assault at this time is given by Captain Ross, of the Austrian service, who also witnessed the battle from the Confederate side. "The enemy," says he, "made no attempt to follow up their advantage, and it is well for them they did not. I see that a General Butterfield, in evidence given before some Federal committee, blames General Meade for not attacking Lee's right after the repulse, imagining that enormous captures of guns and other great successes would have been the result. It was, however, well for the Federals that General Meade did not do so

treat; and bitter as this alternative was—seeing that it involved the abandonment of the scheme of invasion and all the high hopes built thereon—it was imperative, for the position he had to assail was one against which he might dash his army to pieces, but against which he could now hope for no success. Yet he did not begin an immediate retreat, but waited the whole of the following day, during which he was withdrawing his trains and disposing his army for a retrograde movement. And it is the most striking proof that could be given of the confidence Lee still had in his troops, that during that whole 4th of July he was in a mood to invite rather than dread an attack. Retiring his left from around the base of Culp's Hill and from the town of Gettysburg, which was reoccupied by Howard's troops during the forenoon, a strong line of works was thrown up from the Seminary northwestward, and covering the Mummasburg and Chambersburg roads, while another line was formed on the right flank, perpendicular with their general front, and extending back to Marsh Creek. Here, while employed in the work of sending off their wounded, burying their dead, etc., the Confederates stood at bay, hopeless of venturing another attack, yet quite willing to be attacked.

But this was not in the line of General Meade's intent, for having gained a victory, and being certain of the necessity that was upon his antagonist of making a retreat, he was in no mood to jeopard an assured success by any rash adven-

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for he would have found McLaws and Hood's divisions there perfectly ready and willing to give him a much hotter reception than he would have liked." —Cities and Camps of the Confederate States, p. 65. On the Union side, many of the generals present have testified before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, in favor of attack. See Report, second series, vol. i., *passim*.

But since the above text was written, I have become convinced from testimony more weighty than any given above—to wit, the testimony of General Longstreet himself—that attack would have resulted disastrously. "I had," said that officer to the writer, "Hood and McLaws, who had not been engaged; I had a heavy force of artillery; I should have liked nothing better than to have been attacked, and have no doubt I should have given those who tried as bad a reception as Pickett received."

ture. Accordingly, nothing was done save to make some demonstrations of a rather feeble character, and the day was passed in attentions to the wounded and burying the dead, while holding the army in hand for pursuit. That night Lee began to retire by the Chambersburg and Fairfield roads, which leading westward from Gettysburg, pass through the South Mountain range into the Cumberland Valley at a distance of seven miles from each other. As a severe storm had come on during the afternoon and continued during the night, the roads were rendered very bad; so that the retreat was made painfully and slowly, and the rear of the column did not leave its position near Gettysburg until after daylight of the 5th. General Meade, as soon as he was satisfied that the enemy had actually withdrawn, took measures to follow up the retreat.

When it became possible to take account of the losses of this great battle, it was found that on the Union side they included two thousand eight hundred and thirty-four killed, thirteen thousand seven hundred and thirty-three wounded, and six thousand six hundred and forty-three missing, making an aggregate of twenty-three thousand one hundred and ninety.* On the side of the Confederates, they were supposed to be near thirty thousand, whereof nearly fourteen thousand were prisoners.†

* Official Records of the War Department.

† This is simply an approximate estimate, as no report of the Confederate casualties was ever made public. "It is not," says General Lee, "in my power to give a correct statement of our casualties, which were severe." Lee: Report of Gettysburg. The number of prisoners captured by the Army of the Potomac, as by official returns, was thirteen thousand six hundred and twenty one. (Meade: Report of Gettysburg). I believe that the above estimate of thirty thousand for Lee's total loss will not prove to be in excess of the truth. Lee's infantry present for duty on the 31st May was 68,352; and on July 31st it was 41,135—the difference being 27,217.

IX.

THE CONFEDERATE RETREAT.

The retreat of Lee, which became definitively known on the morning of Sunday, July 5, brought with it the important question of pursuit.

Now, there were two lines by which the Confederates might be followed up: the one was a direct pursuit by the same routes over which they had retreated, pressing them down the Cumberland Valley; the other, a flank march by the east side of the South Mountains, defiling by the Boonsboro' passes, with the view to head off the enemy or take him in flank. The former had the recommendation of being the shorter line —the distance to the Potomac (at Williamsport) being in this case about forty miles; and by the latter line, nearly eighty. The only disadvantage attending it arose from the fact that the enemy might hold the *débouchés* of the mountains with a rear-guard, while making good his escape with his main body and trains. General Meade appears to have been in some doubt as to the proper method of action; but on the morning of the 5th, he sent a column in direct pursuit. He ordered Sedgwick's Sixth Corps (then the freshest in the army) to follow up the enemy on the Fairfield road, while he dispatched a cavalry force to press the retreating Confederates on the Chambersburg road. Sedgwick that evening overtook the rear of the Confederate column at a distance of ten miles, where the Fairfield road breaks through a pass in the South Mountain range This position was found to be very defensible; but there was no occasion to attack it, for another course had, meanwhile, been determined on, and Sedgwick was recalled.

Instead of pursuing the enemy by the direct route over which he had retreated, General Meade judged it better to

make a flank march by Middletown and the lower passes of the South Mountain. To this end, General French, who with seven thousand men had since the evacuation of Harper's Ferry been occupying Frederick, was directed to seize these passes in advance and repossess himself of Harper's Ferry. Both these duties were fulfilled by General French, who also sent out a cavalry force that penetrated as far as Williamsport, and destroyed there a Confederate ponton-bridge across the Potomac. Then the army was put in motion by the east side of the South Mountains. On July 6th a large part of the army moved from Gettysburg towards Emmettsburg, and the remainder the following day. July 7th, the headquarters were at Frederick. The 8th, they were at Middletown, and nearly all the army was concentrated in the neighborhood of that place and South Mountain. The 9th, headquarters were at South Mountain House, and the advance of the army at Boonsboro' and Rohrersville. The 10th, headquarters were moved to Antietam Creek: the left of the line crossed the creek, and the right of the line moved up near Funkstown. The 11th, the engineers put a new bridge over the Antietam Creek; the left of the line advanced to Fairplay and Jones' cross-roads, while the right remained nearly stationary. The 13th, Meade had his forces in front of the position taken up by Lee to cover the passage of the Potomac.

The above data will suffice to show that the pursuit was conducted with an excessive circumspection; and Lee, having reached the river six days before, had had time to select and fortify a strong position. Indeed, the Confederate army might have effected an unmolested escape into Virginia, had it not been for the fact that the great rains had so swollen the Potomac as to make it impassable by the ford at Williamsport,* and that the ponton-bridge at Falling Waters had been destroyed by General French. This perilous circum-

* "The Potomac was found to be so much swollen by the rains that had fallen almost incessantly since our entrance into Maryland, as to be unfordable." —Lee: Report of Campaign in Pennsylvania.

stance compelled Lee to take up a defensive position where he might stand at bay, while his communications were being re-established.

As the event proved, it would probably have been a better course to have pushed the pursuit by the direct line, as appears to have been at first intended when Sedgwick, on the 5th, was thrown forward on the Fairfield road. The obstructions which Lee could have placed in the defiles of the South Mountains cannot be considered as presenting any serious difficulty; for General Smith with a division of militia had moved forward from the Susquehanna, on the 3d, into the Cumberland Valley, and on the 5th he seized and held a pass in the South Mountains, a few miles above that through which the Confederate force passed. By this the whole army might readily have defiled through the South Mountains to fall on Lee's flank and rear.* If nothing had been accomplished by this means, the retreat of Lee would still have been followed so closely, that coming to the Potomac, and having an impassable river in his rear, his situation would have been one of the very gravest peril.

It cannot be said that General Meade was not alive to the importance of striking Lee a blow before he should be able to make good his retreat. But he was tardy in realizing the severity of the damage he had inflicted on his opponent, and the distance the army was compelled to march by the line adopted (double that by the Cumberland Valley), together with the slowness of the march (in part necessitated by the bad condition of the roads owing to the severe storm), resulted in Lee's being able to take up a position on the Potomac; and having reached this point three days before

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* "On Saturday (5th), I held the most northern pass, through which, by rapid marching, Meade might have cut off the enemy's rear-guard in the other passes, if they had tried to hold them. Moreover, on July the 6th (*the day Meade moved*), I held the broad turnpike pass to Chambersburg, through which he might have marched his entire army in two days, if all the other passes had been held."—Private letter from General W. F. Smith.

the Union army got up, he had time to put it in a strong condition of defence.

This coign of vantage was on the ridge of Marsh Creek, and formed a powerful kind of *tête-de-pont*, covering the passage of the Potomac at Williamsport. If it was designed to attack this position, it should have been done the moment the army arrived before it, on the 12th. But the day and the morrow passed in timid councils. On the 13th, at a formal consultation of the corps-commanders, the majority of the general-officers voted against an attack, as it was thought the position was too formidable by nature and art to afford any prospect of a successful assault. Nevertheless, on the night of the 13th, General Meade determined to next morning take the offensive. But when, on the morning of the 14th, the troops moved forward, it was discovered that the Confederate army had passed the Potomac. The Confederate engineers had succeeded in improvising a ponton-bridge, and by the aid of this and the ford at Williamsport* (the Potomac having, meanwhile, fallen sufficiently to admit of passage), Lee withdrew the remnant of his force with great skill and complete success.

It will probably always remain one of those questions about which men will differ—whether General Meade should have attacked or refrained from attacking Lee at Williamsport. The adverse opinion of the corps-commanders will probably not be allowed to count for much, seeing it has passed into a notorious maxim that "councils of war never fight." And it may fairly be said that as General Meade determined to attack on the 14th, against the opinion of his

* "Part of the ponton-bridge was recovered, and new boats built, so that, by the 13th, a good bridge was thrown over the river at Falling Waters. Our preparations being completed, and the river, though still deep, being pronounced fordable, the army commenced to withdraw to the south side on the night of the 13th. Ewell's corps forded the river at Williamsport, those of Longstreet and Hill crossed upon the bridge."—Lee: Report of the Invasion of Pennsylvania.

lieutenants, it would have been well had he done so on the 12th, without consulting their opinion. No new element was, in the interval, introduced into the problem, excepting that the strengthening of the position by the enemy rendered attack on the 14th much more difficult than it was on the 12th, and the delay would, therefore, appear to have resulted from hesitation and indecision in the mind of the commander, which under the circumstances must be accounted an error.

The problem, whether Lee should have been attacked in the position he had taken up, is one of a tactical nature, requiring for its solution special and professional knowledge. It is, therefore, one of those questions regarding which public opinion is necessarily worthless. On the other hand, the emphasis with which the corps-commanders pronounced against assault, should carry with it great weight; and my own investigations lead strongly to the conclusion that Meade was right, in the relative situations of the opposing forces, in not attacking.

But the question whether or not General Meade should have attacked at Williamsport, is really not the proper point at issue. It is one of a larger scope, and turns on the whole history of Lee's retreat and Meade's pursuit. The principles already laid down as those that should guide criticism on McClellan's conduct after Antietam, apply with equal and even greater force to Meade's conduct after Gettysburg. That an army that had moved so far from its base, as that of Lee; that had crossed the frontier; that had been defeated in a great battle of three days duration, in which it suffered immense loss; that then sought safety in flight only to find itself barred at the frontier by the rise of the Potomac (as though Providence fought with the Union army), should have been either destroyed or hopelessly crippled, appears indisputable. The Army of the Potomac, though it also had suffered severe loss, was in the highest state of *morale*, and was eager to give its opponent the *coup de grâce*. It was powerful in numbers, and had been strengthened by the addition of eleven thousand men under

General French, by a militia division under General Smith, and by considerable re-enforcements forwarded from Washington and Baltimore by the Government, whose officers, raised for a moment above that paltry policy that commonly controlled their military views, were eager to put into the hands of General Meade every thing needed to assure the devoutly desired consummation of the destruction of Lee, who could not bring into battle array above forty thousand men of all arms. It will be hard ever to persuade the mass of men that this was not within the compass of a vigorous stroke.*

Descending, now, to the question of details: as I have pronounced both in favor of the most vigorous aggressive action of General Meade, and against an attack in the position in which he found himself at Williamsport, I must reconcile this seeming discrepancy, by saying that Lee's position on the ridge of Marsh Creek might have been turned. By throwing his right forward to the Conecocheaque, Meade would have removed his army from the difficult region of woods and hills in which it found itself, and in which all the advantages of position were greatly in favor of the Confederates; and he would have placed it in a country where he would have had the commanding heights down to the river. He would then have overlapped the Confederate left, which was thrown out in the air. To guard against any menace of Lee towards Washington, the South Mountain passes might have been held by the cavalry In this position Meade would have attacked with as many advantages in his favor, as there were in the other disadvantages against him. But even had the army attacked and been repulsed, General Meade would have been forgiven; for in war it is often better to have fought and lost, than never to have fought at all. It will always remain a striking instance of the controlling influence exercised in this war by defensive positions, that the two decisive points of this great campaign were mainly determined by the simple incident of

* "The fruit seemed so ripe, so ready for plucking," said President Lincoln to General Meade, soon after, "that it was very hard to lose it."

securing the defensive. It was in large part the mere holding the position at Gettysburg—the strategic key to the region south of the Susquehanna—that gained for the Union army the battle and the campaign; but when Lee, after terrible losses, found himself compelled to abandon the invasion, and seek safety in retreat, it was by taking up a strong vantage ground on the ridge of Marsh Creek that he was able, in a most difficult situation, to show so imposing a front of opposition as to secure for his army safe exit from Maryland into Virginia.

Thus was baulked and brought to naught the scheme of Confederate invasion, an invasion undertaken by an army powerful in numbers and in the prestige of victory, and aiming at the boldest quarry—the conquest of peace on the soil of the loyal States. That it was a mistake, is not difficult to recognize in the light of the result; but, as I have already pointed out, it was an error in its inception, for it was an enterprise that overstepped the limits of that fitting theory of military policy that generally governed the Confederate war-councils, and committed Lee to all the perils and losses of an invasion, without any adequate recompense, and even without any well-determined military object.

The expulsion of the invaders freed the North from a great dread; and though there were those that were dissatisfied at the incomplete termination of the campaign, the country was not loth to recognize that there had been wrought out for it a great deliverance by the valor of the Army of the Potomac. For once, that sorely tried, long-suffering army had the freely-given boon of a nation's gratitude.

NOTE.—I am indebted to Colonel J. B. Batchelder, author of the well-known and beautifully accurate isometrical drawing of the battlefield of Gettysburg, for a careful revision of the tactical details of the action at Gettysburg, and for many explanations given on the ground.

X.

A CAMPAIGN OF MANŒUVRES.

JULY, 1863—MARCH, 1864.

I.

THE MARCH TO THE RAPIDAN.

THE safe retreat of Lee from Maryland into Virginia imposed upon General Meade the necessity of an immediate pursuit. This he undertook with a promptitude that was very creditable, considering the trying campaign that had just closed.

On recrossing the Potomac, Lee fell back into the Shenandoah Valley, placing his force on the line of Opequan Creek—the same position he had held during the autumn after his retreat from Antietam.

Meade's plan of advance into Virginia was confessedly modelled on that of McClellan in November, 1862; and it was probably the best that could have been adopted. As a problem in that branch of the art of war which is named logistics, or the supplying of armies, it was not considered practicable to subsist a force of the magnitude of the Army of the Potomac by the means available in a direct advance up the Shenandoah Valley. It remained, therefore, to march by the route of the Loudon Valley; and by hugging the Blue Ridge closely, Meade hoped, by vigorous action, to bring the Con-

federate force to battle under advantageous conditions before it should break through the mountains.*

The army crossed the Potomac on ponton-bridges at Harper's Ferry and Berlin on the 17th and 18th July, and followed southward, skirting the Blue Ridge; while Lee, conforming to this manœuvre, fell back up the Shenandoah Valley. The movement of Meade was made with much vigor—indeed with so much vigor that, on reaching Union, on the 20th of June, he was compelled to halt a day, lest by further advance he should dangerously uncover his right; but even with this delay, the army, on reaching Manassas Gap on the 22d, was so well up with the enemy, that it gained that point while the long Confederate column was still passing on the other side of the mountains. This, therefore, seemed an excellent opening for a flank attack, and it was fully appreciated by Meade, who directed five corps on Manassas Gap—the Third Corps, now under command of General French, being in advance. The selection of the leader for an enterprise demanding the most energetic qualities of mind—seeing that it was necessary to force Lee to battle under circumstances in which he would naturally wish to avoid it—was very unfortunate; and by his mismanagement General French succeeded in depriving the army of one of the few really advantageous opportunities it ever had to strike a decisive blow. A slight observing force had been left at the Gap, but this was expelled, and the corps passed through on the evening of the 22d, prepared to advance on Front Royal in the morning. But, on moving forward to strike the enemy's line of retreat, the corps-commander acted with such feebleness,† as to allow the rear-guard to delay him

* No demonstration was made in the Valley of the Shenandoah other than that of a body of cavalry under Gregg, which retired after an indecisive engagement with the Confederate cavalry under General Fitz Hugh Lee at Shepherdstown.

† General Warren, in his evidence before the War Committee, states that General French "made a very feeble attack, *with one brigade only*, and wasted the whole day." He adds, that General Meade "was more disappointed in that result than in any thing that had happened."—Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., pp. 381, 382.

the whole day, so that it was evening before he penetrated to the Confederate line of battle at Front Royal. Next morning, when Meade hoped to give battle, Lee had made good his retreat.* Upon this, as nothing was now to be hoped from the movement on hand, the march was conducted leisurely towards the Rappahannock, and Lee retired to the vicinity o. Culpepper.

In this position a considerable period of repose followed; and this inaction was imposed not more by the necessity of resting and recruiting the army, than because both sides found it necessary to draw detachments from the armies in Virginia for other needs. From the army of Meade a considerable body was taken to send to South Carolina, and a large force withdrawn to dispatch to New York for the purpose of enforcing the draft, the attempted execution of which, some time before, had given rise to extensive riots in that city. On the other hand, the severe pressure that Rosecrans was bringing to bear upon the central army of the Confederacy under General Bragg, in Tennessee, prompted the detachment from Lee's army of the corps of Longstreet, for the purpose of throwing it into the scale as a make-weight against the Union force. This withdrawal took place early in September, and necessarily reduced the Confederates to a purely defensive attitude in Virginia. Soon afterwards, General Meade became aware of Longstreet's departure, and he then sent his cavalry across the Rappahannock, drove the enemy over the Rapidan, and subsequently followed with his whole force, occupying Culpepper and the regions between the Rappahannock and the Rapidan, the latter river now becoming the

* "As the Federals continued to advance along the eastern slope of the mountains, apparently with the purpose of cutting us off from the railroad, Longstreet was ordered on the 19th of July to proceed to Culpepper Courthouse by way of Front Royal. He succeeded in passing part of his command over the Shenandoah in time to prevent the occupation of Manassas and Chester Gaps by the enemy. As soon as a ponton-bridge could be laid down, the rest of his corps crossed and marched through Chester Gap to Culpepper, where they ar rived on the 24th. He was followed by Hill's corps. Ewell reached Front Royal the 23d, and encamped near Madison Courthouse the 29th."—Lee: Report.

dividing line between the opposing armies. As the position held by Lee on the south bank of the Rapidan was a very advantageous one, Meade's projects of advance turned towards a flanking movement; but just at the time he had matured a plan of operations, he was informed from Washington that it was found necessary to still further weaken the Army of the Potomac by the withdrawal of two corps to forward to Tennessee, in which section of the theatre of war the military situation had been seriously compromised by Rosecrans' defeat at Chickamauga—a defeat to which the force sent from Virginia under Longstreet had in no small degree contributed. The corps taken were the Eleventh and Twelfth, and they were put under the command of General Hooker. This, in turn, reduced Meade to a strict defensive; for though he received some accessions to his numbers from the draft, yet these added little to his real strength, the conscripts being raw and unreliable, and large numbers deserted at the first opportunity. It was evident, therefore, that he could undertake no considerable operation until the return of the troops sent to New York. But when, towards the middle of October, these finally came back, and General Meade was about to initiate an offensive movement, he found himself suddenly thrown once more on the defensive by the bold initiative of Lee, in an operation the events of which I shall now relate.

II.

THE FLANK MARCH ON CENTREVILLE.

Made aware of the heavy deduction of force from the Army of the Potomac, but exaggerating probably its extent, Lee early in October determined on an offensive movement that should have the effect of driving Meade back from the line of the Rapidan. With this object he resolved to move around his opponent's right flank, and endeavor to interpose

between him and Washington.* He counted that if he should be able in this situation to seriously cripple Meade, it would exhaust the season of active operations and detain the Army of the Potomac on the frontier for the winter, during which time it would be possible for Lee to still further re-enforce from his own command the heavily pressed Confederate Army of the West.

In execution of this plan, Lee crossed the Rapidan on Friday, October 9th, and taking "circuitous and concealed roads,"† passed by way of Madison Courthouse quite to Meade's right. Stuart, with Hampton's cavalry division, moved on the right of the column, while Fitz Hugh Lee's cavalry division, with a detachment of infantry, was left to hold the lines south of the Rapidan and mask the turning movement.

The first positive intimation which General Meade had of Lee's intention was an attack made upon his advance posts on the right at James City, held by a portion of Kilpatrick's cavalry division and some infantry of the Third Corps. This force was driven in by Stuart on the 10th, and fell back on Culpepper; and it being then clear to Meade that his right was already turned, he that night sent back his trains, and at two o'clock on the morning of the 11th, began a retrograde movement across the Rappahannock. The march was accomplished during that day, and by afternoon the army was across the river.

Lee with his main body neared Culpepper on the 11th to find that the whole army had moved behind the Rappahannock some hours before. He then halted his army during the rest of the 11th, while Stuart pressed the rear of

* I learn from General Longstreet that Lee at this time frequently spoke of an operation that should "swap Queens;" that is, he thought of marching direct upon and capturing Washington, giving up the attempt to cover Richmond. But Mr. Davis would never consent to this war *à l'outrance;* and, besides, the Army of Northern Virginia was at this time too much reduced from its late losses to authorize so audacious an enterprise.

† Lee: Report of Fall Operations in Virginia.

Meade's column, which was covered by the cavalry under Pleasonton.

Buford's division of troopers had crossed the Rapidan at Germanna Ford on the night of the 10th, after the Confederates had begun their movement, but was met on the morning of the 11th by Fitz Hugh Lee's horsemen; whereupon Buford, falling back over the Rapidan, united at Brandy Station with Pleasonton's main body of cavalry, and then followed the army across the Rappahannock.

On the following morning, Monday, October 12th, Gen. Lee advanced his columns; but finding that Meade had been too quick for him, and that his first turning movement had failed, owing to the rapid retreat of his opponent, he determined, instead of following up Meade by the direct line of his retreat, to make a new flank movement by routes to the west, "with the design," as he says in his report, "of reaching the Orange and Alexandria railroad north of the Rappahannock, and interrupting the retreat of the enemy." This operation had very near been successful, owing to the uncertainty of General Meade as to his antagonist's real purpose, and the false movements resulting therefrom.

Having put the Rappahannock between himself and Lee, Meade conceived that his retreat might have been premature, especially as he was informed on the morning of the 12th that Lee was near Culpepper C.H. and it was uncertain whether he intended to do more. Accordingly, that afternoon the main body of the army, consisting of the Second, Fifth, and Sixth corps, with Buford's cavalry division, was countermarched to the south bank of the Rappahannock to proceed back towards Culpepper. General Meade designed to give battle if Lee was really there. But, as has been seen, the latter had that morning again advanced to plant himself by a circuitous turning movement on Meade's line of retreat towards Washington. Thus was presented the curious *contretemps*, that while on the 12th the main body of the army was marching southward to meet Lee at Culpepper, Lee was moving rapidly northward on parallel roads to lay hold of Meade's communications!

But of this mistake, which if prolonged much longer might have proved fatal to Meade, he had that afternoon convincing proof in an event which fell out in this wise.

While the three corps named had been sent on the countermarch towards Culpepper, the Third Corps under General French had been left to guard the line of the Rappahannock, and took position at Freeman's Ford, while the cavalry division of General Gregg watched the passage of the Upper Rappahannock at Sulphur or Warrenton Springs. Now Lee, continuing his northward march, on the afternoon of the 12th struck Sulphur Springs, and there crossed his columns to the north bank of the Rappahannock; so that Gregg found himself assailed by the van of the enemy advancing towards Warrenton, and was driven off after having been somewhat severely handled. Of course, on receiving this intelligence from Gregg, the real nature of Lee's movement was instantly disclosed to Meade, who sent an immediate order recalling the three corps from their untimely move on Culpepper. This order found these corps in bivouac on the road to Culpepper, and reached them towards midnight of Monday, when they at once began a rapid retrograde movement to the north of the Rappahannock.

It is easy to see that from this misunderstanding not only was the general retrograde movement to meet the Confederate advance seriously compromised, but the Third Corps, remaining alone on the north bank of the Rappahannock, was thrown quite out of position and exposed to destruction by an overwhelming force. But Lee, unaware of the true state of affairs, did not turn aside to molest that isolated force, but continued his northward movement, and by a night march of the three corps, the different corps of the Army of the Potomac were, on the morning of Tuesday the 13th, again concentrated on the north bank of the Rappahannock.

As on the morning of the 13th the opposing forces were both on the north side of the Rappahannock, there ensued between the two armies a close race—Lee aiming, by a flank march, to strike in on Meade's line of retreat by the Orange

and Alexandria Railroad, and Meade determined to checkmate him by a rapid retrograde movement. The latter, during that day, fell back along the line of the railroad, and Lee, continuing his advance from Sulphur Springs by parallel routes to the west, struck Warrenton in the afternoon. Here he halted during the rest of that day to supply the troops with provisions.*

Lee's plan now was to advance from Warrenton in two columns—the left column (the corps of Hill) to move northward by the Warrenton turnpike to New Baltimore, and then strike due eastward to lay hold of the railroad at Bristoe Station; the right column (the corps of Ewell) to advance by roads to the east of the route of Hill, passing by Auburn and Greenwich, and uniting with Hill at Bristoe Station.

This project was put in execution on the morning of the 14th; but whether Lee would be able to make good his intent of reaching Bristoe before his antagonist, would, of course, depend on the activity of the latter. Meade, with the uncertainty of what Lee was about, had the interior line; Lee, with a definite purpose and clear line of conduct, had the exterior and longer route to pursue. Anticipating the sequel so far as to say that Meade beat Lee in the race, passing Bristoe with nearly his whole force before Hill and Ewell were able to strike his line of retreat at that point, it remains to describe some interesting complications that arose out of the proximity in which the two armies were manœuvring.

In the retrograde movement of the Union army, on the 13th, it was appointed that the Second Corps under General Warren should, after halting at Fayetteville until the Third Corps under General French was withdrawn, cover the rear of the army; and its route was directed to be by way of Auburn to Catlett's Station, and thence northward along the line of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. In this duty, Kilpatrick's division of cavalry was to co-operate.

Now, on the evening of the 13th, when Lee reached War-

* Lee's Report.

renton, Warren reached Auburn, distant only five miles to the east, and there he bivouacked with his corps on the south side of Cedar Run. To cover his rear from attack from the direction of Warrenton, where Lee was that night (unknown to, but not unsuspected by Warren), Caldwell's division with three batteries* was placed on the heights of Cedar Run. Before dawn of the 14th, while the head of Warren's column was under way crossing Cedar Run, Caldwell's troops lit camp fires on the hill-top to cook breakfast; and in this duty they were engaged when most unexpectedly a battery opened upon them from their rear and directly on the road prescribed for the movement of Warren's column towards Catlett's Station.† This attack, sufficiently bewildering to those upon whom it fell, will readily be understood in the light of the following rather amusing incident.

Stuart with the Confederate cavalry had the day previous met the head of French's column, and, being forced back, retired towards Catlett's Station. But on Sykes' corps moving up the railroad, Stuart found himself enclosed between the two main Union columns, and bivouacked within two miles of General Meade's headquarters and not more than four hundred yards from where Caldwell's division was encamped, sending messengers through the Union lines to notify his friends of his situation. When Caldwell's men lit their fires, Stuart opened on them. Unseen himself in the valley, veiled by mist and the gray morning light, he had yet a plain view of the Union force on the illuminated hill-tops, and for a few minutes, till the troops could be moved to the opposite side of the hill under cover, the fire from the Confederate battery told with fatal effect.‡ Having thus paid his compliments, the dashing *sabreur* escaped by moving to the rear around the Union rear-guard.

But no sooner had Caldwell moved to cover on the opposite

* The batteries of Captains Ricketts, Arnold, and Ames.

† Warren's Report.

‡ A remarkable example of this destructive effect was furnished by one of the shells which killed seven men.

side of the hill than his command was opened on from that side also, the fire coming from the direction of the Warrenton road. The source of this new attack will be readily understood from the already mentioned intentions of Lee; for it has been seen that from Warrenton Ewell's column was to proceed by way of Auburn on Greenwich, and having moved very early in the morning, it was his advance that struck Warren's force.* The moment was now a critical one for Warren, for his advance division under General Hays, which had crossed to the north side of Cedar Run, found itself opposed by a hostile force at the same time that Caldwell's division, on the south side, was fired upon, and the corps appeared to be surrounded and its retreat cut off.† But the actual condition of things was not as bad as appeared. Little more than the mere van of Ewell's column, and that mainly cavalry, had yet come up: the crossing of Cedar Run was not interrupted; Hays, who was on the north side, having thrown out a couple of regiments, repulsed the enemy, and cleared the route over which the corps was to advance;‡ and finally, when the head of Ewell's main column came up, it was held in check by skilful deployments of cavalry and infantry and the practice of the batteries, till the rest of War-

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* Lee: Report of Summer Operations of 1863; Warren: Report of Operations.

† "Attacked thus on every side, with my command separated by a considerable stream, encumbered with a wagon-train, in the vicinity of the whole force of the enemy, and whom the sound of actual conflict had already assured of my position, to halt was to await annihilation, and to move as prescribed carried me along routes in a valley commanded by the heights on each side." Warren: Report of Operations.

‡ These regiments were the One Hundred and Twenty-sixth New York, under Lieutenant-Colonel Bull, supported by the Twelfth New Jersey Volunteers; and General Hays, in his official report, gives the following account of this spirited affair: "I moved forward the entire regiment of the One Hundred and Twenty-sixth New York, supported by the Twelfth New Jersey. In a short time our force came in contact with the rebels. It was short, but very decisive. The rebel cavalry, led by Colonel Thomas Ruffin, charged furiously upon the deployed One Hundred and Twenty-sixth, and were most gallantly repulsed with the loss of their leader, who was mortally wounded."

ren's force had crossed Cedar Run, when he continued his prescribed march—Caldwell's division covering the retreat, and closely skirmishing with the enemy.* Ewell did not follow up directly on the rear of Warren's column, for his prescribed course took him to the left to move by Greenwich and join Hill.†

Meantime, the whole army was pressing on along the railroad towards Centreville, the point of concentration, where General Meade had resolved to halt and give battle. Warren, as has been seen, brought up the rear.

As Lee's purpose was to strike Bristoe Station before Meade should have passed that point, he pressed the advance of Hill and Ewell. When Hill, however, after moving eastward from New Baltimore, in the afternoon approached Bristoe, the whole army, with the exception of Warren's corps, had got beyond that point, and as the head of his column came up, the Fifth Corps, under General Sykes, had just crossed Broad Run. On seeing this, Hill threw out a line of battle to attack the rear of that corps, when suddenly he found his attention called off by the apparition at that moment of Warren, who, after engaging Ewell at Auburn in the manner indicated, had advanced rapidly along the railroad, and reached Bristoe Station only to encounter Hill.

Warren's position was again a critical one; for, instead of finding Bristoe Station held by the Fifth Corps, as had been

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* The escape was so narrow, that, as reported by Colonel Brooke (who commanded the rear brigade of Caldwell's division, and to whose skilful manœuvring the successful withdrawal was in no small degree due), "the enemy succeeded in throwing a column of infantry across the road, and cutting off the Fifty-seventh New York Volunteers. Lieutenant-Colonel Chapman, commanding the regiment, proved himself equal to the emergency, and by promptly moving to the right by a slight detour, succeeded in rejoining the column with but slight loss. I held the enemy at bay on my left and front by fighting him sharply with my flankers and skirmishers, and finally drove him by my fire into the woods on my left."

† According to General Lee's report, Ewell "drove back the rear-guard of the enemy, and rapidly pursued it." But the extent of the pursuit has been recorded above.

indicated to him in General Meade's orders, he discovered that he was there alone, in the immediate vicinity of the whole army of Lee, and found himself suddenly assailed while marching by the flank. But Warren was equal to the occasion, and by a remarkable vigor of action not only extricated his command from a perilous situation, but inflicted a severe blow to the Confederates. This action, known as the battle of Bristoe, I shall briefly detail.

As the head of the column of the Second Corps approached, Hill threw forward a line of battle towards the railroad; but Warren knew the locality with the critical knowledge of an engineer, and forming Webb's division on the right along the embankment near Broad Run, he ordered Hays' division to run for the railroad cut, invisible from the position of both opposing generals. This it quickly did, and the point was reached just in time to meet Hill's advancing line of battle, which, receiving a severe fire from the troops covered by the cut and embankment, and raked by the fire of Ricketts' battery, fell back with heavy loss. Warren immediately advanced a thin line in pursuit, and secured four hundred and fifty prisoners, two standards, and five pieces of artillery. The attack fell mainly on the First and Third brigades of General Webb's division—the former commanded by Colonel Heath, and the latter by General Mallon, an accomplished and patriotic officer who was killed in the action—and on the Third Brigade of General Hays' division, commanded by General Owen. The division of General Caldwell, which had formed the rear-guard, came up for a mile or two on the run, and took position on the left of Hays; but the action had already been decided. Warren's loss was comparatively slight.

Effectual as was the check which Warren had given Hill, the position of the former was not one in which he could remain, while, at the same time, it was difficult to withdraw. And now his situation became more dangerous; for just as towards sunset the combat closed, Ewell's corps, which had

pursued by-roads between the columns of Warren and Hill, came up, and this brought the entire force of Lee in front of the Second Corps. Nevertheless, before Lee could make dispositions for attack, night came on, and, under its friendly cover, Warren retired, and next morning joined the main body of the army massed at Centreville.*

Meade was now strongly posted on the heights of Centreville, and if compelled to fall back from there, would do so into the fortifications of Washington. As no additional turning movement could be of any avail, Lee pushed his advance no further. His intention had been to gain Meade's rear, and as this was now completely foiled, he was not minded to essay assault on the army in position. Resolving, however, not to have made an utterly useless campaign, he threw forward a thin line as far as Bull Run, and thus masking his design, he proceeded to destroy the Orange and Alexandria Railroad from that point southward to Warrenton Junction. Having effectually accomplished that object,† he, on the 18th, began a retrograde movement.

Meade commenced pursuit on the following day,‡ but without overtaking Lee; and in this movement there occurred no rencounter of a more serious character than the wonted indecisive cavalry combats. Stuart, with his two divisions of horse, covered the retrograde movement, and during the entire march was constantly engaged in skirmishes with the Union cavalry. One of these affairs was of some importance. While on the advance towards Warrenton, on the 19th, Kilpatrick's division skirmished warmly with Hamp-

* General Lee states that Hill's attack was made by two *brigades*, and extenuates the result by stating that the assault was "against greatly superior numbers." But Hill's own Report shows that he had two *divisions* on the field. Warren met their attack with little over three thousand men.

† Lee's Report.

‡ This delay in following up was owing to the fact that since the army had crossed to the north side, that stream had become much swollen by heavy rains; and previous to that, not anticipating that the ponton-bridges would be needed, they had been sent with the other trains some eight or ten miles to the rear.

ton's division up to Buckland Mills, at the crossing of Broad Run, on the south bank of which Hampton took post, under the personal direction of Stuart, who here planned a skilful manœuvre to defeat his opponent. Kilpatrick having forced the crossing by turning the flank of Hampton, Stuart fell back slowly towards Warrenton with the view of permitting Fitz Lee's cavalry division to come up from Auburn and attack the Union cavalry in flank and rear. This plan was carried out with some success. Fitz Lee arriving just below Buckland surprised Kilpatrick's force on the flank, and Stuart, hearing Fitz Lee's guns, pressed vigorously in front with Hampton's division. A stubborn resistance was offered, but a charge *au fond* finally forced Kilpatrick's command to give way, and he retreated in some confusion.* Lee retired behind the Rappahannock.

The Army of the Potomac being pushed forward as far as Warrenton, General Meade was compelled to halt there to await the repairing of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. This work, undertaken with much energy, was accomplished early in November; and on the 7th, the whole army continued the advance towards the Rappahannock in two columns. General French had command of the left wing, composed of the First, Second, and Third corps, and General Sedgwick had command of the right wing, composed of the Fifth and Sixth corps. The left column was directed to cross the Rappahannock at Kelly's Ford, and the right column at Rappahannock Station. Lee held position south of the Rappahannock, in the vicinity of Culpepper, with outposts at Kelly's Ford on the south bank, and at Rappahannock Station on the north bank. The Third Corps under Birney had the advance on Kelly's Ford, and on reaching that point, Birney crossed over a division by wading, without waiting for the laying of the pontoon-bridges, and advancing an attacking party, composed of Ber-

* Stuart says, "*great* confusion." "I pursued them from three miles of Warrenton to Buckland, the horses at full speed the whole distance, the enemy retreating in great confusion."—Stuart's Report. But the reports of Custer and Kilpatrick are naturally not so frank as to avow this.

dan's Sharp-shooters, the Fortieth New York, the First and Twentieth Indiana, the Third and Fifth Michigan, and the One Hundred and Tenth Pennsylvania regiments, carried the rifle-pits and captured five hundred prisoners. The enemy was prevented from strengthening the force in the works by the fire of batteries on the heights on the north side, which swept the plain on the southern bank. Birney's loss was trivial.

While the left column was thus passing at Kelly's Ford, the right wing was forcing a crossing against more formidable obstacles. The Confederates occupied a series of works on the north bank of the river at Rappahannock Station, which had been built some time before by the Union troops, and consisted of a fort, two redoubts, and several lines of rifle-trenches. These works were held by two thousand men belonging to Early's division of Ewell's corps. Commanding positions to the rear of the fort having been gained, heavy batteries were planted thereon, and a fierce cannonade opened between the opposing forces. Just before dark, a storming party was formed of Russell's and Upton's brigades of the Sixth Corps, and the works were carried by a very brilliant *coup de main*. Over fifteen hundred prisoners, four guns, and eight standards were here taken. Sedgwick's loss was about three hundred in killed and wounded.

This brilliant opening of the campaign should have insured a decisive operation; and it is probable that, if a rapid advance had been made either towards Culpepper or to the south of it by Stevensburg, the Confederate army, which lay in winter-quarters in *echelon* from Kelly's Ford to the west of Culpepper, might have been cut in two. But the army having crossed on the night of the 7th and morning of the 8th, the whole of that day was wasted in useless and uncertain movements,* and Lee, not courting battle, availed himself of the opportunity that night to withdraw again across the

* On this point, see Birney's testimony: Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 372; Warren's testimony: Ibid., p. 385.

Rapidan. Meade then advanced and took up position between the Rappahannock and the Rapidan, which was nearly the same ground he held before his retreat.

This campaign may be regarded from two points of view, and from each is susceptible of a different critique. Considered as a movement to meet Lee's advance, it was perfectly successful, and its conduct highly creditable. Lee's line of manœuvre was, it is true, exterior to that of Meade, and as it was necessary for him to pursue circuitous routes in order to effect his turning movements, this imposed on the former considerably greater marching. Yet he had a clear object in view, whereas his antagonist was necessarily delayed by ignorance of his opponent's real design. The very success of Lee's plan depended on being pushed impetuously. Nevertheless, he delayed at Madison Courthouse, which thwarted the success of his first flank movement; and he delayed again at Warrenton, which baulked that of his second. But even in view of these halts, which General Lee partly explains on the ground that they were necessary in order to supply the troops, the operations of the 14th were not conducted with much vigor. Ewell allowed himself to be detained by the rear-guard, at Auburn, from early in the morning till noon; and from Greenwich he took a blind track across the fields, which he found very difficult, and which gave him much delay, thus preventing his junction with Hill at Bristoe until too late. Nor was Hill's march made with much more expedition; for notwithstanding that his route to Bristoe was but four miles longer than that of Warren, and that the latter was delayed for several hours by his rencounter with Ewell at Auburn, he reached the decisive point as soon as Hill. Warren's conduct throughout these operations was excellent, and a model of the execution of the duties of a rear-guard.

But if, on the other hand, we look upon General Meade's line of duty as calling essentially for offensive action, his course in this retrograde movement is open to another order of criticism.

It is due to observe that General Meade not only did not wish to avoid battle, but he was really anxious to precipitate decisive action, provided, always, he could fight on advantageous terms. Yet he appears to have overpassed several excellent openings for a bold initiative. It would have been interesting to see the result of a determination that, overleaping a too pedantic view of the nature and uses of lines of communication, would have tried the experiment of holding the army in a favorable position and allowed Lee to continue his turning movements. There is little doubt that if Meade had held fast either at Culpepper or at Warrenton, Lee would not have ventured beyond those points, for his opponent would then have been on *his* communications, to whose endangered safety he would have presently been recalled. Lee's conduct throughout shows how diffident he was in regard to this point—feeling his way, and afraid to move until he had first started Meade, which was the very way of defeating the object he had in view, if he really wished to interpose between the Army of the Potomac and Washington—a purpose which, under the circumstances, was only to be accomplished by the utmost audacity of movement.

There is another opportunity of which General Meade might have availed himself, and which I shall point out. When, on the 12th, the Second, Fifth, and Sixth corps had been sent back across the Rappahannock under a false lead, these corps were in position, by a move to the right, to fall upon the rear of Lee's column in crossing at Sulphur Springs. This would have been a bold move, and would have been as effective as a retrograde movement in relieving French on the north bank of the Rappahannock. But it would have been somewhat hazardous; for Lee might have disputed, with a part of his force, the passage of the Æstham fork of the Rappahannock, and moved with the rest to overwhelm the Third Corps at Freeman's Ford. It is quite likely that General Meade, who was exceedingly anxious to bring on a battle, would have made some of the moves indicated, had he received prompter intelligence of his opponent's movements.

But he was excessively ill-informed by his cavalry, and in each case learned the enemy's position only when it had already become too late to act upon it.

The line of manœuvre adopted by General Lee in this campaign was the same as that used by him in the previous summer against Pope's army. But the result was very different: and this arose from two causes. Lee had now neither a lieutenant capable of making such a flank march as that of Jackson on Manassas, nor such an opponent as Pope; for, if Meade's action was not brilliant, he at least did not lose his head. As a whole, the campaign added no laurels to either army; yet it was none the less attended with much toil and suffering—sleepless nights and severe marches and manifold trying exposures. But this is a part of the history of the army, of which those who did not bear the heat and burden of the day can never know much.

III.

MINE RUN.

Judging from the experience of such military operations as had been attempted during previous years at the season now reached, it might have been inferred that the army could do nothing better than go into winter-quarters and await the coming spring before entering upon a new campaign. But General Meade felt that the condition of the public mind would hardly brook delay; and being himself very eager for action, he anxiously watched a favorable opportunity to deliver battle. Such an opportunity he thought he saw towards the end of November; and he then planned an operation known as the "Mine Run move"—an operation which deserved better success than it met.

It was ascertained that Lee, while resting the right of his

army on the Rapidan near Morton's Ford, had left the lower fords of the river at Ely's, Culpepper Mine, Germanna and Jacobs' mills uncovered, and depended for the defence of that flank upon a line of intrenchments which he had constructed perpendicular to the river and extending along the left bank of a small tributary of the Rapidan named Mine Run, which flows almost at right angles with the former stream, and empties into it at Morton's Ford. Relying for the security of his right upon that line, Lee had placed his force in cantonments covering a wide extent of country; so that while Ewell's corps held position from Morton's Ford to Orange Courthouse, Hill's corps was distributed from south of that point along the railroad to near Charlottesville, with an interval of several miles between the two corps.

This wide separation of his opponent's forces gave Meade the hope that, by crossing the Rapidan at the lower fords, turning the Confederate right, and advancing quickly towards Orange Courthouse by the plank and turnpike roads that connect that place with Fredericksburg, he might be able to interpose between the two hostile bodies under Ewell and Hill, and destroy them in detail.

This plan, different from the kind of operations ordinarily attempted in Virginia, was well suited to the circumstances. It was based upon a precise mathematical calculation of the elements of time and space, of the kind for which Napoleon was so famous, and depended absolutely for its success on a rigorous execution of all the foreordained movements in the foreordained time and way. Thus planning, Meade attempted the bold *coup d'essaye* of cutting entirely loose from his base of supplies, and, providing his troops with ten days' rations, he left his trains on the north side of the Rapidan, relying on the meditated success to open up new lines of communication.

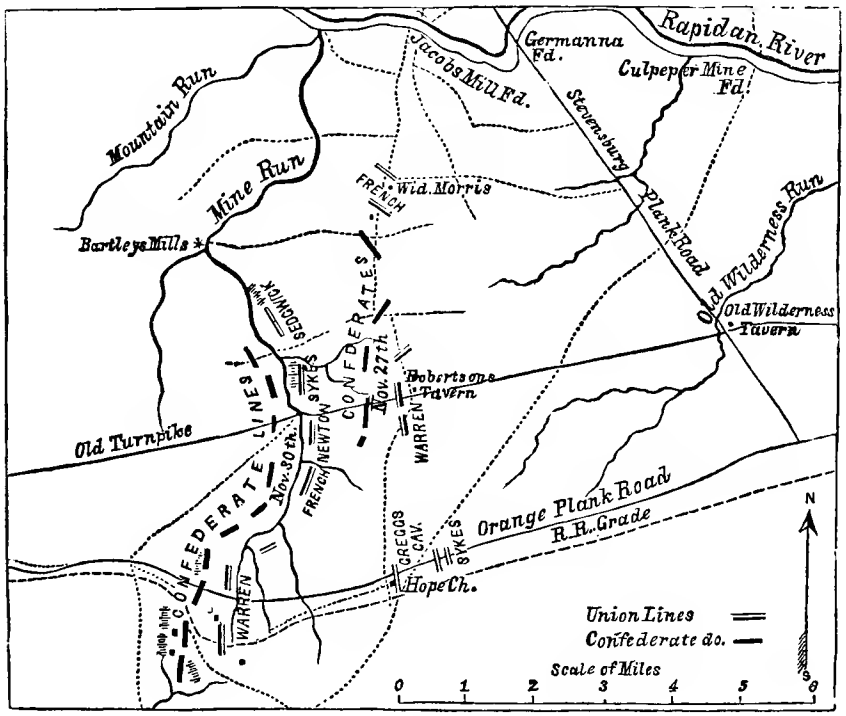
The movement was begun at dawn of the 26th of November, and the order of march was as follows. The Fifth Corps, followed by the First Corps, was to cross the Rapidan at Culpepper Mine Ford and proceed to Parker's Store, on the

plankroad to Orange Courthouse. The Second Corps was to cross at Germanna Ford, and proceed out on the turnpike (which runs parallel with the plankroad) to Robertson's Tavern. To this point also the Third Corps, crossing at Jacobs' Mill Ford, and followed by the Sixth Corps, was to march by other routes, and there make a junction with the Second Corps. With the left thus at Parker's Store and the right at Robertson's Tavern, the army would be in close communication on parallel roads, and by advancing westward towards Orange Courthouse would turn the line of the Mine Run defences, which it was known did not extend as far south as to cross the turnpike and plankroads. As the distance of the several corps from their encampments to the assigned points of concentration was under twenty miles, General Meade reasonably assumed that marching early on the 26th, each corps-commander would be able to make the march inside of thirty-four hours, or, at most, by noon of the 27th. It remains to relate how this well-devised and meritorious plan was baulked by circumstances that, though seemingly trivial to those uninstructed in war, are yet the very elements that in a large degree assure success or entail failure.

The first of these delays was occasioned by the tardiness of movement of the Third Corps under General French, which having a greater distance to march than the other corps, yet did not reach its assigned point for the crossing of the Rapidan until three hours after the other corps had arrived. This caused a delay to the whole army of the time named; for, not knowing what he should encounter on the other side, General Meade was unwilling to allow the other corps to cross until the Third was up. A second obstacle was the result of an unpardonable blunder on the part of the engineers in underestimating the width of the Rapidan, so that the ponton-bridges it was designed to throw across that stream were too short, and trestle-work and temporary means had to be provided to increase their length. In addition, another cause of delay resulted from the very precipitous

banks of the Rapidan, which rendered the passage of the artillery and trains tedious and difficult. The effect of these several circumstances was that the army, instead of making the passage of the river early in the day, was not across until the following morning. Twenty-four hours had passed, and only half the distance was made.

Early on the morning of the 27th, the corps were again in motion, and, under imperative orders from General Meade,



SKETCH OF MINE RUN.

they pushed forward with greater rapidity. The Second Corps, under General Warren, reached its designated point at Robertson's Tavern, about one o'clock, and meeting a force of the enemy, immediately began to develop its strength and position by a brisk skirmish fire. It will be remembered that, according to the plan, this corps was here to have been joined by the Third Corps, and it was not allowed to make a serious attack

until General French should arrive. But that officer had fallen into a series of luckless mishaps, by which it happened that soon after crossing the Rapidan at Jacobs' Mill, he took the wrong road to reach Robertson's Tavern, falling upon a route too much to the right, which brought it against Johnson's division of Ewell's corps. With this force it had a brisk brush, and by the time it could extricate itself, get on the right road, and open communications with Robertson's Tavern, it was night.

Meanwhile, the intention was fully disclosed, and Lee, as may be supposed, was not inactive. Hill's corps, which had been scattered far south of Orange Courthouse, was called up; Ewell was withdrawn from his advanced position on which he had checked French and confronted Warren, and the whole Confederate force concentrated on the line of Mine Run, to bar progress beyond that point.

Had the original intention of march been carried out, this line would not have opposed a barrier to Meade's advance; for though Mine Run crosses the two roads on which the army was to advance towards Orange Courthouse, yet its defences did not stretch as far southward as these two roads —the right being, in fact, at Bartlett's Mills, on Mine Run, and thence up to the Rapidan. But, by the disclosure of Meade's purpose, Lee was able to extend his line so as to cover these roads, and the nature of the ground and the improvised works that might be thrown up in the course of four-and-twenty hours, would render the position a very powerful one.

The Confederate line was drawn along a prominent ridge or series of heights, extending north and south for six or eight miles. This series of hills formed all the angles of a complete fortification, and comprised the essential elements of a fortress. The centre of the line presented four or five well-defined facings of unequal length, occupying a space of more than three thousand yards, with such angles of defence that the fire of the enemy was able to enfilade every avenue of approach, while his right and left flanks were not less strongly

protected. Stretching immediately in the rear and on the flanks of this position was a dense forest of heavy timber, while some twelve hundred yards in front was Mine Run—a stream of no great width, but difficult for infantry to cross from the marshy ground and dense undergrowth of stunted timber with which it was frequently flanked on either side, as well as from the abrupt nature of its banks. In addition to these natural defences, the enemy quickly felled in front of a large extent of his position a thick growth of pine as an abatis, and hastily constructed trenches and breastworks for infantry. The position was, in fact, exceedingly formidable.

This is what the army presently found out, when, being at length concentrated, it pushed forward on the following morning, the 28th—the enemy having during the night abandoned his advanced position—and after a short march of two or three miles found itself brought up against the line of Mine Run. Upon reaching this point the troops were immediately put into position, and reconnoissances were made with the view of ascertaining a point of attack.* At the same time that these reconnoissances were made, General Warren, with the Second Corps, strengthened by a division of the Sixth Corps, was sent to move upon the enemy's right; find out how far south his line extended, and, if possible, outflank and turn him. In these tentative efforts passed the 28th of November.

Next day, Warren, having moved southward to the Catharpin Road, completed his observation of the Confederate right, and announced the conditions as favorable for an attack from that point. At the same time, Sedgwick, having carefully examined the Confederate left, reported that there was a point there which he thought weak and assailable. General

* "In order to secure an efficient and active reconnoissance, orders were given to every corps-commander to prepare himself to attack the enemy in his immediate front, and to examine critically, and to ascertain, as early as he possibly could, where would be the best place to attack the enemy."—Meade's evidence: Report on the Conduct of the War, p. 345.

Meade accordingly resolved to make attack on both wings, and for the purpose of strengthening the force with which Warren was to operate on the left, he detached from the corps of French two divisions which were sent to the former, which made Warren's force some twenty-six thousand men. Sedgwick, with his Sixth Corps, supported by the Fifth, would operate on the right. French, with the remaining division of his command and two divisions of the First Corps, under Newton, would hold an interval of four miles between the right and left; and as this centre would be weak, it was assigned a *rôle* of simple observation. Dispositions in accordance with this plan were not completed until late on Sunday, the 29th; so it was resolved to make the attack next morning, and it was appointed that after a heavy artillery fire, Warren, on the left, should open the attack at eight o'clock, and that an hour after he was engaged, Sedgwick should assault on the right.*

Early on Monday morning the army was under arms, impatiently awaiting the signal-gun. At last, the sound of Sedgwick's cannon came rolling along the line, when the entire artillery of the right and centre opened upon the works of the enemy. But not an echo from Warren on the left! The explanation of this silence soon came in intelligence brought by an aid-de-camp. A close observation of the enemy's position by dawn revealed a very different state of facts than was presented the previous evening.† The presence of Warren's troops had attracted Lee's attention to his right, and during the night he had powerfully strengthened that flank by artillery in position and by infantry behind breastworks and abatis. Looking at the position with the critical eye of an engineer, but not without those lofty inspirations of cour-

* This disposition was based on the hope that as Warren's attack was to be the main one, his opening first would cause the Confederates to weaken their left, opposed to Sedgwick, and thus afford him a favorable opportunity.

† It happened frequently during the war that dispositions were made during the day for attack the following morning. Attacks thus planned in advance generally failed, as might be expected.

age that o'erleap the cold dictates of mathematical calculation, Warren saw that the task was hopeless; and so seeing, he resolved to sacrifice himself rather than his command. He assumed the responsibility of suspending the attack.

His verdict was that of his soldiers—a verdict pronounced not in spoken words, but in a circumstance more potent than words, and full of a touching pathos.

The time has not been seen when the Army of the Potomac shrank from any call of duty; but an unparalleled experience in war, joined to a great intelligence in the rank and file, had taught these men what, by heroic courage, might be done, and what was beyond the bounds of human possibility. Recognizing that the task now before them was of the character of a forlorn hope, knowing well that no man could here count on escaping death, the soldiers, without sign of shrinking from the sacrifice, were seen quietly pinning on the breast of their blouses of blue, slips of paper on which each had written his *name!*

That this judgment of General Warren and of his troops was correct, General Meade became himself convinced on riding over to the left and viewing the position. It was, in fact, even more formidable than the line of the Rapidan, which it had been considered impracticable to assail by a front attack. The only possible opportunity of now continuing the enterprise was by moving still further to the left, and by manœuvring on Lee's right, endeavor to force him out of his intrenched line. But, under the circumstances, with the uncertainties of a Virginia December, this was hardly to be seriously considered. The entire plan had been conditioned on a quick operation that would uncover direct communications with the Rapidan. The trains, therefore, had been left on the north bank, and the troops furnished with a limited number of rations, now nearly exhausted. In this state of facts, grievous and galling though it was to permit the campaign to come to such abortive issue, General Meade felt there was no alternative. He, therefore, during the following night,

withdrew the army across the Rapidan, and it resumed its old camps.* Lee did not follow up in the least.

IV

THE ARMY IN WINTER QUARTERS.

The movement on Mine Run terminated for the season grand military operations in Virginia, and the army established itself in winter cantonments for the next three months. During this period the dignity of dulness was disturbed only by one or two cavalry expeditions, planned with the ambitious aim of capturing Richmond by a sudden dash. The first of these schemes, which had the merit of boldness in conception if not in execution, was devised by General Butler, then commanding the Department of Virginia and North Carolina. Believing that Richmond had been stripped of its garrison for the purpose of strengthening the Confederate force operating in North Carolina under General Pickett, General Butler formed the design of swooping down on the Confederate capital with a cavalry raid by way of New Kent Courthouse on the Peninsula. As a "diversion" in favor of this enterprise, the Army of the Potomac was to make a demonstration across the Rapidan. The raiding column, under command of Brigadier-General Wistar, left New Kent Courthouse on the 5th of February, and reached the Chickahominy at Bottom's Bridge

* It would have been a move well adapted to the circumstances had General Meade, on seeing his plan of operations frustrated, advanced on Fredericksburg instead of falling back to his old line across the Rapidan. This would have had the character of an offensive movement, and would have saved the *morale* of the army and the confidence of the country, both of which were rudely shaken by these frequent fruitless operations. But here General Meade was met by previous prescriptions from General Halleck, not to make any change of base. This absurd piece of pedantry prevented what would have been an excellent measure. From General Meade I learn that he would assuredly have made this move, had he been free to do so.

on the following day. The 7th, in obedience to orders from Washington, General Sedgwick, temporarily commanding the Army of the Potomac in the absence of General Meade, threw Kilpatrick's cavalry division across the Rapidan at Ely's Ford, and Merritt's division at Barnett's Ford, while, at a point between, two divisions of the Second Corps made the passage at Germanna Ford by wading. The Confederates held their positions, and considerable skirmishing took place during the day. The troops remained on the south bank until the time fixed for the termination of General Butler's movement, when they were withdrawn. The raiding scheme resulted in nothing. General Wistar found Bottom's Bridge blockaded, and after reconnoitring the position, he returned. He does not appear to have lost any thing; but the troops of the Army of the Potomac, that had the luck to be engaged in the "diversion," suffered a sacrifice of two hundred and fifty men.

A few weeks later a bold expedition was fitted out with the view of releasing the large body of Union prisoners held at Richmond, the accounts of whose ill-treatment had excited profound sympathy throughout the North. This enterprise was under command of General Kilpatrick, with some three or four thousand cavalry, seconded by Colonel Dahlgren, a young officer of extraordinary dash and daring. It set out on the 28th of February, after Sedgwick's corps and Custer's cavalry had made a demonstration on Lee's left. Crossing the Rapidan at Ely's Ford, beyond the Confederate right flank, the force marched thence to Spottsylvania Courthouse. Here Colonel Dahlgren, with five hundred picked men, assuming the most daring part of the expedition, diverged from the main body and pushed forward by way of Frederickshall towards the James River. The column under General Kilpatrick at the same time moved rapidly southward, and on the following night, the 29th, struck the Virginia Central Railroad at Beaver Dam Station, whence parties were sent out to damage the road. While engaged in this work, a train of troops arrived from the direction of Richmond; but

after some skirmishing these retired. Another party was dispatched to destroy the bridge of the Fredericksburg and Richmond Railroad across the South Anna—a purpose that was foiled by the presence of a small observing force. The main column then advanced with insignificant opposition, and on the forenoon of the following day, March 1st, reined up before the fortifications of Richmond. The swoop had been so sudden that the troopers passed unopposed within the outer line of redoubts; but the Confederates having, meanwhile, brought up some forces, Kilpatrick found himself arrested before the second line by opposition he could not break through. In the mean time, Colonel Dahlgren, with his isolated party, had moved southward from Frederickshall, after destroying the depot, till he struck the James River, where he did considerable damage to the canal, etc. A native of the country had undertaken to lead the party to a ford not far from Richmond, but through ignorance or treachery he missed his way, and conducted the column to near Goochland Courthouse, a full day's march from the intended point. The guide was hanged on the nearest tree, and Dahlgren moved down the course of the river towards Richmond, in front of which he arrived late on March 1st. But in the interim, General Kilpatrick, having been estopped in front of the fortifications, and hearing nothing of Dahlgren's column, became fearful as to his safety, and decided to fall back down the Peninsula, which he did in face of considerable opposition.

Dahlgren was thus completely isolated from the main body, while the country around him, now thoroughly aroused, was alive with parties of armed citizens and militia. During the night of the 3d, while on the retreat, Colonel Dahlgren, with a hundred horsemen, became separated from the rest of his command, and falling into an ambush, he was killed, with some of his men, the rest surrendering. The other portion succeeded in making a junction with Kilpatrick's column, which returned to the Army of the Potomac by way of Fortress Monroe.

These outlying operations, which were indeed of a rather Quixotic character, very slightly affected the main current of the war, whose issue, it was clearly seen, must await new and weightier trials of strength by the two great armies. As all the grounds of inference led to the belief that the spring campaign must be decisive of the war, both armies, as by consent, settled down in winter cantonments, to recuperate from the wear and tear of the trying season of 1863, and renew their strength for the impending shock of arms. Lee held the south bank of the Rapidan, his forces being distributed from the river along the railroad to Orange Courthouse and Gordonsville. The Army of the Potomac established itself along the Orange and Alexandria Railroad from the Rapidan back to the Rappahannock. The ranks of both armies were replenished by conscripts, and drills, inspections, and reviews were energetically pushed forward within the opposing camps. Thus the months of winter glided by, till vernal grasses and flowers came to festoon the graves on battle-fields over which the contending hosts had wrestled for three years.

Then, upstarting, the armies faced each other along the lines of the Rapidan.

XI.

GRANT'S OVERLAND CAMPAIGN.

MAY—JUNE, 1864.

I.

COMBINATIONS OF THE SPRING CAMPAIGN.

IF one should seek to discover the cause of the indecisive character of the Virginia campaigns, and why it was that for three years the Army of the Potomac, after each advance towards Richmond, was doomed to see itself driven back in discomfiture, it might be thought that a sufficient explanation was furnished in the consideration of the inherent difficulty of the task, arising from the near equality of its adversary in material strength, and the advantage the Confederates enjoyed in fighting defensively on such a theatre as Virginia. But to these weighty reasons must be added another, of a larger scope, and having relation to the general conduct of the war. Justice to the Army of the Potomac demands that this should here be stated, especially as the campaign on which I am about to enter will, happily, show the army under new auspices as regards this particular.

In Virginia, the Army of the Potomac had not only to combat the main army of the South, but an army that, by means of the interior lines held by the Confederates, might be continually strengthened from the forces in the western zone, unless these should be under such constant pressure as to prevent their

diminution. To the Confederates, Virginia bore the character of a fortress thrust forward on the flank of the theatre of war, and such was their estimate of its importance, that they were always ready to make almost any sacrifice elsewhere to insure its tenure.

In this they were greatly favored by the false and wasteful military policy of the North, between whose two great armies in the East and the West there had hitherto been such lack of combination of effort, that the Army of the Potomac and the Army of the West had commonly found themselves in their extremest crises at the moment when the other, reduced to inaction, left the Confederates free to concentre rapidly on the vital point. Since the time when, for a brief period, McClellan had exercised the functions of general-in-chief—a period during which he had opportunity to outline, but not to execute, a comprehensive system of operations—an incredible incoherence prevailed in the general conduct of the war. For three years there was presented the lamentable spectacle of three or four independent armies, acting on various lines of operations, and working not only with no unity of purpose, but frequently at cross-purposes; while in the military councils at Washington there ruled alternately an uninstructed enthusiasm and a purblind pedantry.

At the period already reached in this narrative, the conviction had become general throughout the North that this crude experimentalism was seriously jeoparding all hope of a successful issue of the war. This prompted the nomination of Major-General Grant to the grade of lieutenant-general—in which rank he was confirmed by the Senate on the 2d March; and on the 10th, a special order of President Lincoln assigned him to the command of all the "armies of the United States."

The elevation of General Grant to the lieutenant-generalship gave perfect satisfaction throughout the North—a sentiment arising not more from the conviction that it put the conduct of the war on a sound footing, than from the high estimate held by the public of General Grant's military tal-

ent. The country had long ago awaked from its early dream of a coming "Napoleon," and there was no danger of its cherishing any such delusion respecting General Grant; but it saw in him a steadfast, pertinacious commander, one who faithfully represented the practical, patient, persevering genius of the North. As it was his happy fortune to reach the high office of general-in-chief at a time when the Administration and the people, instructed somewhat in war and war's needs, were prepared to give him an intelligent support, he was at once able, with all the resources of the country at his call, with a million men in the field, and a generous and patriotic people at his back, to enter upon a comprehensive system of combined operations. Moreover, the instrument with which he had to work was one highly tempered and brought to a fine and hard edge. The troops had become, by the experience of service, thoroughly inured to war. They could march, manœuvre, and fight. The armies, in fact, were *real* armies, and were, therefore, prepared to execute operations that at an earlier period would have been utterly impracticable.

The lieutenant-general was committed by the whole bent of his nature to vigorous action; and, upon taking into his hand the baton, he resolved upon a gigantic aggressive system that should embrace simultaneous blows throughout the whole continental theatre of war. His theory of action looked to the employment of the maximum of force against the armies of the Confederates, to such a direction of this power as would engage the entire force of the enemy at one and the same time, and to delivering a series of heavy and uninterrupted blows in the style of what the Duke of Wellington used to call "hard pounding," and of what General Grant has designated as "continuous hammering."

The armed force of the Confederacy was at this time mainly included in the two great armies of Johnston and Lee—the former occupying an intrenched position at Dalton, Georgia, the latter ensconced within the lines of the Rapidan. These bodies were still almost as powerful in numbers as any the South

had ever had in the field. Their intrinsic weakness lay in the fact that those reservoirs of strength from which armies must constantly draw to repair the never-ceasing waste of war were well-nigh exhausted; that the sustaining power of the Confederacy,—the moral energy of the people—had so declined, that what remained of arms-bearing population in the South evaded rather than courted service in the field. Still, the existing armies presented a formidable and unabashed front, and by skilful conduct they might yet hope to do much.

The immediate command of all the armies west of the Alleghany mountains, and east of the Mississippi River, was committed to Major-General W T. Sherman, who was intrusted with the duty of acting against Johnston's force by a campaign having as its objective point Atlanta, the great railroad centre of the middle zone. The lieutenant-general then established his headquarters with the Army of the Potomac, from where he designed to exercise general supervision of the movements of all the armies.

This act was of itself a recognition of that primacy of interest and importance which belonged to that army, but which appeared, for a time, to have passed from it to its more fortunate rival in the western theatre of operations. General Grant saw that the task assigned the Army of the Potomac was no less momentous now than ever; for it still confronted, in Virginia, the foremost army of the Confederacy, under the Confederacy's foremost military leader. After three years of colossal combat, that army, the head and front of all the hostile offending, still continued to cover Richmond—a point which had been the first objective of the army's efforts, and which, though originally of no marked military importance, had come to acquire the kind of value that attaches to a national capital. Bearing on its bayonets the fate of the Confederacy, the Army of Northern Virginia stood erect and defiant, defending Richmond—threatening Washington. No man but knew that so long as it held the field, the Confederacy had lease of life.

It was the *destruction* of this force that General Grant now

undertook to accomplish, by the double agency of direct attack, and by engaging all the remaining forces of the enemy available for its re-enforcement. Having provided for the latter in instructions to his lieutenants, he fixed his headquarters at Culpepper Courthouse during the last days of March, and sat down to study the difficult chess-board of Virginia. His opponent was that same veteran player who had checkmated so many antagonists—Robert E. Lee.

Thus were brought face to face those Two whom, by common consent, the North and the South regarded as its own and its antagonist's ablest military leader. It was natural that a surpassing interest should attach to the portentous game of war to which these rivals prepared to address themselves. From the moment the nature of the coming campaign disclosed itself, the sounding notes of preparation and the energetic concentration of force in Virginia, made it manifest that it was no ordinary passage at arms in which the contending hosts were to meet; but a remorseless life and death struggle. Grant was fully resolved, by rapid and remorseless blows, to crush that army which, spite of the many shocks it had received in past years, seemed yet invulnerable. But Lee knew well the matchless temper of the instrument he wielded, and though he saw the superior heft of his antagonist's arm, and read that in his eye which showed the combat must be mortal, he did not lose heart of hope that by a stubborn defensive and quick returns of offence he might still hold his own.

In entering upon the problem of framing a plan of campaign against Richmond and the covering force, there was one question that could not fail to present itself to General Grant, and it is one of a higher order than any mere point of grand tactics. It has relation to the choice of a line of operation against Richmond as between that of the "overland route" and a transfer of the army to the Peninsula, or the south side of the James River.

The former of these methods had been repeatedly essayed during the past three years—by Burnside and Hooker on the

Fredericksburg route; by Pope and Meade by the Orange and Alexandria Railroad. Uniform ill-success had attended each attempted advance, and the many repulses the Army of the Potomac had met on that line had marked it with a bloody condemnation.* The distance to Richmond by this route, from any front held along the Rappahannock or Rapidan, is between sixty and seventy miles. This necessarily involves communications excessively long and difficult to maintain for an army dependent for its supplies on its wagons, while the march must be made in a region full of the finest defensive positions. Whether the movement be made by the Fredericksburg or by the Orange and Alexandria Railroad—the only two lines of manœuvres available in the overland route—peculiar difficulties beset it on each. But assuming these to be severally overpassed, the successful execution of the long march only results in bringing the army abreast the fortifications of Richmond, within which the defending force, with its communications south and west all open and intact, might stand an indefinite siege. In other words, the aggressive army is brought to a dead-lock; and if it be attempted to undo this by shifting to the south side of the James River, with the view of operating against Richmond's communications, the transfer is made at the expense of the one advantage of the overland route (namely, that it covers the national capital), and the same line of operations is taken up, after enormous cost, that might have been assumed at first, without any sacrifice whatever. If the army, therefore, is strong enough, and so placed by the presence of such a garrison and covering force for the defence of Washington as to leave that city out of the question, there would seem to be every advantage in taking up, at the start, a line of operations that obviates the peculiar difficulties of the overland route.

* I speak here of the opinion of the army; for what is called *public* opinion was much divided. The fact, however, that the views of those at home were mainly influenced by extrinsic and political considerations (the supporters of McClellan condemning and his opponents favoring the overland route), makes public opinion hardly worth discussion.

Now, it is an interesting fact that, at the time the problem of the Virginia campaign first came before the mind of General Grant in a definitive shape (which was shortly before he came East, and while he was still a major-general), he was so strongly impressed with the weight of the considerations adverse to the adoption of the overland route, that he committed himself to a very decided expression of opinion against it, and, in an official communication addressed to Washington, urged a coast movement south of the James River. General Grant argued that, as there was at hand a sufficiency of troops to form two armies equal each in strength to the single force of Lee, Washington, that vexatious element, should be eliminated from the problem, by assigning to it a defending army capable of making it quite secure; and that the other army, formed into a powerful column of active operations, should be transferred to a point on the seaboard, there to act against the communications of Richmond.

Without seeking to draw any inference favorable to this plan from the experience of the other plan of campaign actually adopted by the lieutenant-general, there are sufficient reasons to authorize the assertion that it was of the two much the preferable method. In a country so favorable to defensive warfare as is Virginia, the true theory of action for the party upon whom is placed the burden of the offensive, is, while acting on the aggressive strategically, to seek to secure the advantage of a tactical defensive—that is, to so threaten the vital lines of the enemy as to compel him to fight for their tenure or recovery. As regards Richmond, an operation from the coast by the James or south of it, is the only method in which an army can be speedily, effectively, and without loss, applied in the realization of this principle. This fact is sufficient to determine its immense advantage over the overland movement.

By what inspiration of his own, or by what influence of others, it was that General Grant renounced a plan of campaign thus recommended by soundest military reasoning, and which, while he was yet at the West, he had himself strongly

urged, it needs not here to inquire. But when he established himself in Virginia, and prepared to begin operations, he changed his views and adopted a kind of mixed plan of campaign, by which it was proposed to act with the main column on the overland route from the Rapidan to the James, but, at the same time, secure, by an independent force, some of the recognized advantages of a flank menace on the communications of Richmond. The latter operation was intrusted to General B. F. Butler, who, with an army of about thirty thousand men, was to ascend the James River from Fortress Monroe; establish himself in an intrenched position near City Point, whence he was to operate against Richmond, or its communications, or invest that city from the south side, or be in position to effect a junction with the Army of the Potomac coming down from the north. Butler's force consisted of two corps, respectively under Generals Gillmore and W F Smith. In addition to this co-operative column, General Grant organized an auxiliary force to threaten the westward communications of Richmond. General Sigel, who held a considerable army for the protection of West Virginia and the frontiers of Maryland and Pennsylvania, was instructed to form his forces into two columns—the one, of ten thousand strong, under General Crook, to move for the Kanawha and operate against the Virginia and East Tennessee Railroad; the other, seven thousand strong, under Sigel in person, to advance as far as possible up the Shenandoah Valley, with the view to compel Lee to make detachments from his main force to meet this menace against his westward lines of supply.

This was one of those combinations that are more specious in theory than successful in practice; for such outlying columns, moving against an enemy holding interior lines, are very liable to be beaten in detail, or, at least, to have their efforts neutralized, and made of no avail.*

* The combination of action of these three columns formed a concentric operation which may be either good or most pernicious according to circumstances. Touching this point, General Grant makes an absolute statement of principle which can only be true under certain circumstances. "Generally

It is probable, however, that General Grant's main reliance was upon the Army of the Potomac, which, powerful in numbers, and in a high state of efficiency, discipline, and *morale*, had never been better fitted to take the field. At the time General Grant came to Virginia, it was reorganized into three corps—the Second, under Major-General Winfield Scott Hancock, the Fifth, under Major-General Gouverneur K. Warren, and the Sixth, under Major-General John Sedgwick.* The

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speaking," says he, "concentration can be practically effected by armies moving to the interior of the enemy's country from the territory they have to guard."—Instructions to General Butler: Report of Operations, page four. Now while this principle is true under certain conditions, it is very wide of the mark as above formulated. Concentric operations are good in two cases: 1. When they tend to concentrate a scattered army upon a point where it will be sure to arrive before the enemy; 2. When they direct to the same end the efforts of columns which are in no danger of being beaten separately by a stronger enemy. Jomini justly observes: "Une ligne d'opérations double, contre les parties d'une armée ennemie plus rapprochées, sera toujours funeste, à forces égales, si l'ennemi profite des avantages de sa position, et manœuvre avec rapidité dans l'intérieur de la sienne."—Jomini: Histoire des Guerres de Frédéric II., vol. i., p. 293.

Now the point of concentration of the three columns, respectively under Meade, Butler, and Sigel, was Richmond; and from the interior lines held by the Confederates, the latter could unite much more rapidly on this point than could the Union forces. In this regard, therefore, this combination lacked the first condition under which a concentric operation is judicious; and, as there was danger that the outlying forces might be overwhelmed by superior numbers, it violated also the second condition.

* In the reorganization of the Army of the Potomac, the Second, Fifth, and Sixth corps were consolidated into two divisions. The first and second divisions of the Third Corps were transferred to the Second Corps, preserving their badges and distinctive marks. The third division of the Third Corps was transferred permanently to the Sixth Corps. The three divisions forming the old First Corps, consolidated into two divisions, were transferred to the Fifth Corps, preserving their badges and distinctive marks. The reorganized army then stood as follows:

Fifth Corps.

First Division, Brigadier-General Charles Griffin.
First Brigade, Brigadier-General James Barnes.
Second Brigade, Brigadier-General J. J. Bartlett.
Third Brigade, Brigadier-General R. B. Ayres

command of the army remained under General Meade, who had proved himself to be an excellent tactician.

The three corps-commanders were men of a high order of ability, though of very diverse types of character. Hancock

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Second Division, Brigadier-General J. C. Robinson.
First Brigade, Colonel Leonard.
Second Brigade, Brigadier-General Henry Baxter.
Third Brigade, Colonel Dennison.

Third Division, Brigadier-General S. W. Crawford.
First Brigade, Colonel W McCandless.
Second Brigade, Colonel J. W Fisher.

Fourth Division, Brigadier-General J. S. Wadsworth.
First Brigade, Brigadier-General L. Cutler.
Second Brigade, Brigadier-General J. C. Rice.
Third Brigade, Colonel Roy Stone.
Inspector-General and Chief of Staff Lieut.-Colonel H. C. Bankhead.
Chief of Artillery, Colonel C. S. Wainwright.

Second Corps.

First Division, Brigadier-General F. C. Barlow
First Brigade, Colonel N. A. Miles.
Second Brigade, Colonel T. A. Smythe.
Third Brigade, Colonel R. Frank.
Fourth Brigade, Colonel J. R. Brooke.

Second Division, Brigadier-General John Gibbon.
First Brigade, Brigadier-General A. S. Webb.
Second Brigade, Brigadier-General J. P. Owens.
Third Brigade, Colonel S. S. Carroll.

Third Division, Major-General D B. Birney.
First Brigade, Brigadier-General J. H. Ward.
Second Brigade, Brigadier-General A. Hays.

Fourth Division, Brigadier-General J. B. Carr.
First Brigade, Brigadier-General G. Mott.
Second Brigade, Colonel W. R. Brewster.
Inspector-General and Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-Colonel C. H. Morgan
Chief of Artillery, Colonel J. C. Tidball.

Sixth Corps.

First Division, Brigadier-General H. G. Wright.
First Brigade, Brigadier-General A. T. A. Torbert.
Second Brigade, Colonel E. Upton.

may be characterized as the ideal of a *soldier*: gifted with a magnetic presence and a superb personal gallantry, he was one of those lordly leaders who, upon the actual field of battle, rule the hearts of troops with a potent and irresistible mastery. Warren, young in the command of a corps, owed his promotion to the signal proofs of ability he had given, first as a brigadier, then as chief-engineer of the army, and latterly as the temporary commander of the Second Corps. Of a subtle, analytic intellect, endowed with an eminent talent for details, the clearest military *coup d'œil*, and a fiery concentrated energy, he promised to take the first rank as a commander. Sedgwick, long the honored chief of the Sixth Corps, was the exemplar of steadfast soldierly obedience to duty: singularly gentle and child-like in character, he was scarcely more beloved in his own command than throughout the army.

A fit leader for the cavalry corps had long been wanting. This desideratum was fully filled by the appointment of Major-General P. H. Sheridan. Although his experience had been confined to that of a divisional general of infantry in the West, enough was known of his character to justify the nomination, and his first campaign left no doubt of his pre-eminent fitness for the command.

The staff organization of the Army of the Potomac remained unchanged. Brigadier-General H. J. Hunt continued to be the efficient chief of artillery; Major James C. Duane was chief-engineer, and Brigadier-General Rufus Ingalls,

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Third Brigade, Colonel H. Burnham.
Fourth Brigade, Brigadier-General A. Shaler.

Second Division, Brigadier-General G. W Getty.
First Brigade, Brigadier-General F. Wheaton.
Second Brigade, Colonel L. A. Grant.
Third Brigade, Brigadier-General T. H. Neill.
Fourth Brigade, Brigadier-General A. L. Eustis.

Third Division, Brigadier-General H. Prince.
First Brigade, Brigadier-General W. H. Morris.
Second Brigade, Brigadier-General D. A. Russell.

Inspector-General and Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-Colonel M T. McMahon
Chief of Artillery, Colonel C. H. Tompkins.

facile princeps of quartermasters, remained at the head of that great department of administrative service so long under his charge.

This much for the Army of the Potomac. It should be added, that about the time it began active operations, it was re-enforced by the Ninth Corps under General Burnside, who, however, commanded it independently of General Meade. This corps had lately returned from its campaign in East Tennessee, and rendezvoused at Annapolis, where it had recruited its ranks and received the addition of a division of colored troops. All doubt as to its destination was dispelled at the end of April, when it was called to Washington, and thence marched to the Rapidan to make a junction with the Army of the Potomac. The united strength of the four corps gave Grant a movable column of about one hundred and forty thousand men of all arms. The rolls of Lee's army showed a force, present for duty, of fifty-two thousand six hundred and twenty-six men—foot, horse, and artillery.

The 3d of May the order went forth that the army should that night launch forth on its great adventure. The campaign thus initiated—a campaign unsurpassed by any on record, in the elements that make war grand, terrible, and bloody—will form the subject-matter of the succeeding chapters.

II.

THE BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS.

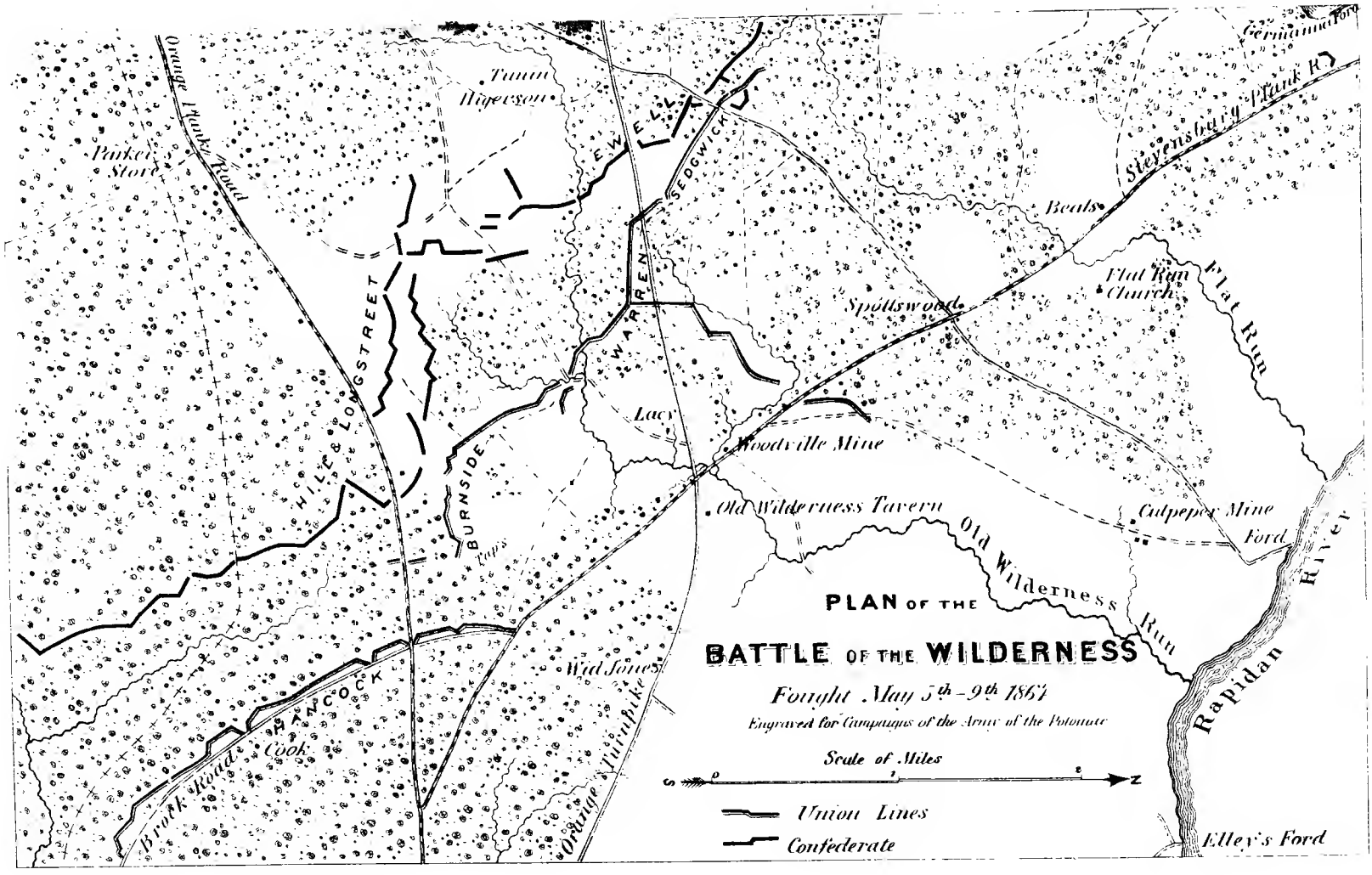
The defensive line for many months occupied by the Confederates along the bluffs that skirt the south bank of the Rapidan was so strong by nature and art that a direct attack was out of the question. Lee as little feared as Grant designed such an attack, and both the defensive preparations of the former, and the offensive preparations of the latter, contemplated a turning movement upon the right or the left

flank of the Confederate line. It only remained to choose the direction to be given the advance—whether by the right or the left.

The views of General Grant strongly favored an operation against Lee's left, crossing the Rapidan above that flank. This plan was recommended by the consideration that an advance by this line would cover the communications with Washington against any contingency of a counter-move northward by Lee, and force him directly back towards Richmond. It was, however, attended with the serious difficulty that the duration of the campaign would be limited by the amount of rations that could be carried with the army, since it would be impracticable to keep up a line of supplies in an advance by that route. This objection was of sufficient weight to determine the adoption of the other alternative, which was to cross the Rapidan by the lower fords and turn Lee's right.

Quitting the camps in which it had lain during the winter, the army moved at midnight of the 3d of May. The advance to the Rapidan was made in two columns: the right column, made up of the corps of Warren and Sedgwick, to cross at Germanna Ford; the left column, consisting of Hancock's corps, at Ely's Ford, six miles below.

Warren's corps, forming the advance of the right column, marched from the vicinity of Culpepper, and, preceded by Wilson's cavalry division, reached Germanna Ford at six o'clock of the morning of Thursday, the 4th; and as soon as the bridge was laid, began the passage, which was completed by one o'clock. During the afternoon, Sedgwick's corps followed across, and encamped for the night near the river. Warren, advancing some miles southward from the Rapidan, bivouacked at Old Wilderness Tavern at the point of intersection of the plankroad from the Germanna Ford with the turnpike from Orange Courthouse to Fredericksburg. On the latter road, Wilson's division of cavalry was, in the afternoon, thrown out towards Robertson's Tavern to watch the directions whence any hostile menace might be expected. The left column, consisting of Hancock's corps, moved from its


PLAN OF THE
BATTLE OF THE WILDERNESS
Fought May 5th - 9th 1864
Engraved for Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac
Scale of Miles
S
0
1
2
N
Union Lines
Confederate
Orange Plank Road
Parker's Store
Tanin Higerson
EWELL
SEDGWICK
WARREN
BURNSIDE
HILL & LONGSTREET
HANCOCK
Brock Road
Cook
Wid Jones
Orange Turnpike
Lacy
Woodville Mine
Old Wilderness Tavern
Old Wilderness Run
Spottswood
Beals
Flat Run Church
Flat Run
Steyensburg Plank R.
Germanna Ford
Culpeper Mine Ford
Rapidan River
Elley's Ford

encampment near Stevensburg, and advanced to Ely's Ford,* preceded by Gregg's division of cavalry. When the corps reached the Rapidan the cavalry was well across, and had the canvas ponton-bridge nearly laid. This work being soon completed, the infantry made the passage and pushed forward to Chancellorsville, which place it reached at nine in the morning of the 4th, the cavalry being thrown out towards Fredericksburg and Todd's Tavern. At Chancellorsville, Hancock's troops rested for the remainder of the day, awaiting the passage of the heavier column on the right. The troops bivouacked for the night on Hooker's old battle-ground.

Thus the morning of Thursday, the 5th of May, found a hundred thousand men across the Rapidan. The barrier that had so long divided the opposing armies was passed, and with the mingled emotions which grand and novel enterprises stir in men's breasts, the troops looked out, hopefully, yet conscious that a terrible struggle was before them, into a region yet untrodden by the hostile armies, but soon to become historic by a fierce grapple of armed hosts and bloody battles in many tangled woods.

Lee had offered no opposition to the passage of the Rapidan. His right was turned. Was this to be considered a great success? The answer will depend on the line of action marked out for himself by General Lee.

In the defence of rivers, military art presents several distinct lines of conduct. 1. The general on the defensive may permit the crossing of a part of the assailing force, and then, by destroying the means of passage, seek to overwhelm the isolated fraction.† 2. He may oppose directly the passage of the hostile army, or, by occupying advantageous positions,

* General Grant, in his official report (p. 6), inadvertently states that the Second Corps crossed at United States Ford; but Ely's Ford was the point of passage.

† The conduct of the Archduke Charles at Essling, is a good example of this. See Vial: Cours d'Art et d'Histoire Militaires, vol. ii., p. 92.

prevent it from deploying.* 3. He may allow the enemy to make the passage entirely unobstructed, but fall upon him after crossing. In this case he simply observes the line of the river, and holds his masses distributed at convenient points within supporting distance.

This last method was that adopted by General Lee; and, as the line to be defended was long, and it was uncertain whether Grant would essay a turning movement on his left towards Gordonsville, or on his right by the lower fords, he had along the river merely a force in observation, while his main masses were positioned in echelon from the Rapidan near Somerville Ford to Gordonsville—Longstreet's corps being posted near the latter place, Hill's in the vicinity of Orange Courthouse, and Ewell's thence up to and along the Rapidan, the right of the Confederate line resting near Raccoon Ford. It is obvious, therefore, that though the successful passage of the Rapidan by the army with its enormous train of four thousand wagons was a matter of congratulation, it was no proof that a severe struggle was not imminent.†

* A striking illustration of this mode of action is presented in the conduct of Vendôme in disputing the passage of the Adda by Prince Eugene in 1805. It is thus described by Dufour: "Eugene had gained a march upon Vendôme and was attempting to throw a bridge across the Adda at a very favorable spot. Vendôme came up as soon as he could, and arrived before the bridge was completed. He tried to arrest the work of the pontoniers, but in vain. The ground was so well swept by the artillery of Eugene that he could not get near enough to injure the workmen. Still, the passage of the river must be prevented. Vendôme put his army to work upon a trench and parapet, surrounding the ground occupied by the imperialists after crossing. They were finished nearly as soon as the bridges. Eugene deemed the passage of the river impracticable and ordered a retreat."—Dufour: Strategy and Tactics, p. 252.

† Lieutenant-General Grant, touching this point, uses language which shows that he regarded the passage of the Rapidan as a very important achievement. "This," says he, "I regarded as a great success, and it removed from my mind the most serious apprehensions I had entertained, that of crossing the river in the face of an active, large, well-appointed, and ably-commanded army, and how so large a train was to be carried through a hostile country and protected."—Grant: Report of Operations of 1864–5, p. 6. But the trouble in regard to the trains really began when the army reached the Wilderness, being there shut up in the restricted triangle between the Rapidan and Rappahannock.

The line of march of the Army of the Potomac, after crossing the Rapidan, led through that region known as the Wilderness, which extends a considerable distance southward from the river, and westward as far as Mine Run. It was along its gloomy margin that the bloody battle of Chancellorsville had been fought a twelvemonth before. Now General Grant did not expect to be brought to quarters in this difficult country, and the direction given the columns when the march was resumed on the morning of Thursday, May 5th, was such as would have carried them quite beyond the bounds of the Wilderness region.* He counted that the Confederate right being turned by the successful passage of the Rapidan, he would be able to mask his march through the Wilderness, and then by a rapid advance towards Gordonsville, plant himself between the Confederate army and Richmond.

To foil his adversary's design was Lee's first aim. The plan he formed to effect this is one of the boldest and most

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* The following extract from the order of march for May 5th will show the line of advance contemplated by General Grant, and the points the corps were that day to reach, had not the movement been interrupted by Lee:

"HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
May 4, 1864—6 P. M.

"The following movements are ordered for the 5th May, 1864: 1st. Major-General Sheridan, commanding cavalry corps, will move with Gregg's and Torbert's divisions against the enemy's cavalry in the direction of Hamilton's crossing. General Wilson, with the third cavalry division, will move at five A. M. to Craig's Meeting-house on the Catharpin road. He will keep out parties on the Orange Courthouse pike and plankroad, the Catharpin road, Pamunkey road (road to Orange Springs), and in the direction of Troyman's Store and Andrews' Store or Good Hope Church. 2d. Major-General Hancock, commanding Second Corps, will move at five A. M. to Shady Grove Church and extend his right towards the Fifth Corps at Parker's Store. 3d. Major-General Warren, commanding Fifth Corps, will move at five A. M. to Parker's Store on the Orange Courthouse plankroad, and extend his right towards the Sixth Corps at Old Wilderness Tavern. 4th. Major-General Sedgwick, commanding Sixth Corps, will move to Old Wilderness Tavern on the Orange Courthouse pike as soon as the road is clear. * * *

"By command of MAJOR-GENERAL MEADE."

skilful conceptions of that officer. Instead of falling back, on finding his flank turned, he took a strategic offensive, directed a rapid concentration of his forces to meet Grant, and aimed to shut Grant up in the Wilderness.

From Orange Courthouse, which was the centre of Lee's position, two parallel roads (the Orange and Fredericksburg plankroad and turnpike) run eastward and strike Grant's line of march at right angles. By directing his forces rapidly forward on these routes, Lee would fall upon the army on the march and compel battle in the Wilderness, where he hoped to lure his antagonist into tangled labyrinths of confusion and disaster. This region, well known to him, was to his antagonist pure *terra incognita*. In its thick chaperal, through which no artillery could play, Grant's masses would lose their force of impact, while the Confederate marksmen, with an almost Indian skill in woodcraft, could lie unseen in their gray array amid those dun woods and deal death to the assailants. Being apprised, therefore, on the morning of the 4th, that the Army of the Potomac had begun the passage of the Rapidan, he promptly directed his forces forward to meet it by the routes I have indicated. The mean distance of the corps from their camps to where they would strike the army was about twenty miles. Ewell's corps was thrown forward on the old turnpike, and Hill's on the plankroad. Thus, while the Army of the Potomac was, throughout the 4th, defiling to the south bank of the Rapidan, the Army of Northern Virginia, making a rapid change of front, hurried forward to meet its rival with a front of opposition before it should have time, by a march beyond the Wilderness, to lay hold of the Confederate communications with Richmond.* That night the van of the

* "The enemy crossed the Rapidan at Ely's and Germanna fords. Two corps of this army moved to oppose him—Ewell's by the old turnpike, and Hill's by the plankroad. They arrived this morning (May 5th), in close proximity to the enemy's line of march."—Lee: Dispatch of May 5, 1864. Longstreet's corps, which formed the extreme left of the Confederate line, was further off than the others, being near Gordonsville; but it also was ordered up.

hostile armies bivouacked, unsuspecting, very close to each other—Warren's corps at Wilderness Tavern, situate at the junction of the Germanna Ford plank with the Orange and Fredericksburg turnpike; Ewell's corps on the latter road, within three miles of Warren's position.

Early next morning—the morning of the 5th of May—the Union columns set out to resume the onward march—the left column, under Hancock, being directed from Chancellorsville on Shady Grove Church, and the right column, led by Warren's corps, from Wilderness Tavern to Parker's Store, on the Orange and Fredericksburg plankroad. Warren's command was next to the enemy, and as the opening of the battle of the Wilderness took shape from Warren's movements, it will be necessary to describe these in detail.

The proximity of the Confederates, the position of whose advance has been indicated above, was not at all known.* But to guard against any approach by the Orange turnpike, Warren threw out the division of Griffin on that road to guard against any irruption of the enemy into the route upon which Sedgwick's corps, which followed the Fifth, was yet to move from Germanna Ford; while he set the van of his column, composed of the division of Crawford, in motion by a wood road to gain Parker's Store.

Now Ewell also continued his eastward march early that morning on the turnpike, so that presently the skirmishers of Griffin's division, which had been thrown forward on that road, were driven in. Moreover, no sooner had Crawford's force neared Parker's Store than the troopers in his front, which had already occupied that point early in the morning, were met running back; and on sending forward a reconnoitring force, it was found that a column of the enemy was press-

* This ignorance of the enemy's position was partly due to the fact that Wilson's division of cavalry, which had, on the afternoon of the 4th, moved out on the turnpike nearly to Robertson's Tavern, was withdrawn that evening, and proceeded on a scout to Parker's store on the plankroad. Therefore no feelers were out on the route by which Ewell was advancing.

ing forward on the plankroad also.* It will be sufficiently clear what this force was when it is remembered that Lee had dispatched Hill's corps on this road, and the enemy encountered by Griffin was the van of Ewell's column, which, as already seen, had bivouacked the night before within three miles of Wilderness Tavern. These developments, of course, necessitated a cessation in the prescribed movement of General Warren, who found himself called upon to meet an immediate and pressing emergency.

Such was the situation of affairs when, on the morning of Thursday, May 5th, Generals Grant and Meade reached Old Wilderness Tavern. Neither of these commanders, however, believed that aught but a small force was in front of Warren to mask the Confederate retreat, as it was not deemed possible that Lee, after his defensive line had been turned, could have acted with such boldness as to launch forward his army in an offensive sally. It was, therefore, at once resolved to brush away or capture this force; but as this determination was formed under a very erroneous apprehension of the actual situation, the means employed were inadequate to the task.†

The main development of opposition having come from the force that showed itself against Griffin on the turnpike, an attack was ordered at that point—Wadsworth's division

* "Led the advance of the Fifth Corps at five A. M., with orders to proceed to Parker's Store. Received the following instruction from General Warren: 'Throw out a skirmish line well to your left and rear facing the plankroad, so that the enemy cannot get on your flank or rear without your knowing it. General Getty is now moving up the plankroad towards your left. If you hear firing in that direction it will be his.' Took the wood road from the Lacy House, and pushed on till reaching the open space about one mile from Parker's Store. The cavalry had become engaged with the enemy, who pressed them so hard that they sent back for support. I deployed the Bucktails at once to the front, and they advanced just in time to resist an attack of infantry that had just arrived. Took up position, and at twenty minutes past eight A. M. received an order from General Warren, stating that the movement had been suspended and that Griffin and Wadsworth would attack on the turnpike."—Crawford: Notes on the Battle of the Wilderness.

† As direct testimony to this state of feeling on the part of the commanding general, I extract from my note-book the following memorandum made on the

(also of Warren's corps) being disposed in line on the left of Griffin, and the division of Robinson in support. Crawford's movement towards Parker's Store, which had already been arrested by the enemy, was now formally suspended. One of its brigades (that of McCandless) was sent to act on the left of Wadsworth's command, and the remainder of the division was afterwards withdrawn—the enemy following up and firing into the rear of the column.

With this force an impetuous attack was at noon made on the enemy on the turnpike. The brunt of this assault fell to the lot of Griffin's division, of which Ayres' brigade was formed on the right, and Bartlett's the left of the Orange turnpike. These succeeded in carrying every thing in their front; and with dispositions better suited to the circumstances, Ewell's corps (only the van of which had yet reached the ground) should have been crushed.* But as the attack

spot: "May 5th; rode with Grant, Meade, and the staff to Old Wilderness Tavern; found Warren's corps in position there, and Sedgwick coming up. At eight o'clock, while on the way, a message came that the enemy were advancing on us by the turnpike. Griffin's division out on that road. At nine A. M., General Meade said to Warren, Sedgwick, and others standing by: '*They [the enemy] have left a division to fool us here, while they concentrate and prepare a position towards the North Anna; and what I want is to prevent those fellows from getting back to Mine Run.*'"

* From officers of Ewell's corps engaged in this action, I learn the following particulars.

When the first onset was made by the Fifth Corps, Johnson's division alone held the position. Jones' brigade, formed across the turnpike, was swept back by the force of the assault, and his troops fell back much broken. It was, however, immediately replaced by Stewart's brigade, and almost simultaneously with the first signs of weakness in Johnson's line, Rodes' division arrived, took position on its right, and, by a firm counter-attack, drove the Union troops back. It is very clear from the confession of the disorder resulting from the first attack of the Union force that, had adequate preparations been made, Ewell's corps might have been overwhelmed. I may remark that General Warren urged a just view of the situation—setting forth that if, as was believed at headquarters, there was but a rear-guard in his front, the attack could but little affect the great campaign on which the army was entering; but if the Confederates were present in force, time should be allowed to form a really weighty attack. But immediate action, with such means as were at hand, had been determined upon.

was ordered under the impression that only a rear-guard of the enemy was present, the dispositions made were very far from being adapted to the actual situation.

Recovering from its momentary repulse, the van of Ewell's force re-formed on a wooded acclivity a short distance in the rear, and there being joined by the remainder of the corps, the Confederates were soon in position not only to withstand the shock of Warren's onset, but to assume the offensive. It had been designed that the right of Warren's line should be sustained by the left of the Sixth Corps, the division of Wright forming the connection; but, owing to the thickness of the woods, that officer was unable to get up to Warren's support in time, and this left the right of the latter exposed. Against this naked flank the Confederates made a vigorous attack upon Ayres' brigade of Regulars, and this giving way, Bartlett's brigade also was beaten back.* Two guns that had been advanced on the turnpike to take advantage of the first success, their horses being killed, were left between the lines, and fell into the hands of the enemy.† On the left of Griffin, Wadsworth's division advanced simultaneous with it to the attack; but there was no connection between the two, and the troops of the latter in their passage through the dense thicket, having taken a somewhat false direction, unwittingly exposed their left flank to a destructive fire from the enemy, which threw them back in some confusion.‡ The brigade of

* "Moved at noon with Ayres' Regulars on the right. Attacked the enemy on my front and drove him. The Regulars gave way, which exposed our right flank, and rendered retreat necessary by the brigade. This could not be effected across the ground by which we advanced, and I brought out the command by a detour through the woods to the left, in rear of the enemy."—Bartlett: Notes on the Battle of the Wilderness.

† Meade: Report of the Battle of the Wilderness.

‡ The cause of Wadsworth's repulse affords a curious illustration of the difficulties that beset the movement of troops in such a region as the Wilderness. General Warren gave Wadsworth his direction by a point of the compass, there being no other guide in such a thicket. His course was to be due west from the Lacy House, which would have brought him to the left of Griffin and on a prolongation of his line. But Wadsworth started facing northwest

Crawford's division (that of McCandless), which was to the left of Wadsworth, occupied an isolated position, and being nearly surrounded, it was easily driven from the field, with the loss of almost two whole regiments. Thus all the ground gained was given up, but the Confederates did not follow, and Warren assumed a new line somewhat in rear, but still in front of Old Wilderness Tavern and across the Orange turnpike.

Such were the initial operations of the battle of the Wilderness. The opening was not auspicious. It gave Warren's corps a very severe shock, entailing upon it a loss of above three thousand men. The result left no doubt respecting the presence of the enemy in force, and early in the day, when the serious opposition encountered by the Fifth Corps made this manifest, General Grant, suspending the previously ordained marches of the corps, made dispositions to accept Lee's gage of battle. The Sixth Corps being directly in rear of the Fifth, was ready to take post on Warren's right. But Hancock's column, which was moving considerably to the left, and had that morning marched southward from Chancellorsville, was quite out of position for a battle in the Wilderness. Instructions were therefore sent recalling it to unite with the main body by a movement up the Brock road to its intersection with the Orange plankroad. This order was received by Hancock at eleven o'clock, and the countermarch immediately begun. He was then distant about ten miles.*

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instead of going due west. Now Ewell's line was at right angles with the turnpike, so that by the time Wadsworth's line of battle passed the Higerson House [see map] it had come almost to face the turnpike directly, and the first fire of the enemy came square upon its flank. The thick woods prevented any change on the spot, and by running back, the men did about the best thing they could.

* "At five A. M. on the 5th May, the Second Corps moved towards its designated position at Shady Grove Church, taking the road by the Furnace and Todd's Tavern. My advance was about two miles beyond Todd's Tavern, when, at nine A. M., I received a dispatch from the major-general commanding the Army of the Potomac to halt at the tavern, as the enemy had been discovered in some force on the Wilderness pike. Two hours later I was directed to move my command up on the Brock road to its intersection with the Orange plankroad." —Hancock: Report of The Battle of the Wilderness.

It will be borne in mind that the Confederate corps of Hill was hurrying forward on the Orange plankroad, and that the van of Warren's force which had gone out towards Parker's Store in the morning had seen this column filing rapidly down that road. Four miles east of Parker's Store the plankroad is intersected by the Brock road, which runs southward to Spottsylvania Courthouse, and on which Hancock was moving up to join the main body of the army It is obvious, therefore, that this junction of road was a strategic point of the first importance, and if Hill should be able to seize it, he would interpose effectually between the two Union columns. Discerning this danger, General Meade, early in the day, directed a division of the Sixth Corps, under General Getty, to hold stoutly this position until Hancock's junction could be effected. While the latter was still far off, Getty had begun to feel the presence of the enemy, and hour by hour it grew more heavy upon him. But he held his post immovably, and towards three o'clock in the afternoon, the welcome cheer of Hancock's approaching troops was heard. Then the position was secure, and the Second Corps, hurrying forward as rapidly as the narrow defiles of the forest would permit, was disposed in double line of battle along and in front of the Brock road, facing Hill's line drawn up across the Orange plankroad.* To make the tenure of the position certain, in case the enemy should assault, as seemed likely, substantial lines of breastworks were immediately constructed by Hancock's troops; but before these were entirely completed he received orders to advance upon Hill and drive him back on the plankroad beyond Parker's Store.

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* Birney's division, which led the van of Hancock's corps, first joined Getty, and was posted on the right soon after the divisions of Gibbon, Mott, and Barlow came up, and were placed on the left; Barlow's division (with the exception of Frank's brigade, which was stationed at the junction of the Brock road with the road to the Catharpin furnace) formed the left of the line, and was thrown forward on some high, cleared ground in front of the Brock road, where, as the only available place in the dense, environing forest, Hancock massed his artillery.

The situation of the opposing forces was now peculiar enough. Warren had engaged Ewell on the turnpike with such result as has already been seen, and Hancock now prepared to attack Hill on the plankroad; but there was no connection whatever either between the two Federal or the two Confederate columns. Each combat, in fact, had the character of an action in a defile, and had very slight bearing the one on the other.

A little past four o'clock, the attack on Hill was opened by Getty's command. His troops encountered the enemy in a line of battle, not intrenched, about three hundred paces in front of the Brock road, and immediately became hotly engaged. But as it was soon manifest that the Confederates were present in heavy force, Hancock advanced his own corps. The fight at once grew very fierce, the opposing forces being exceedingly close and the musketry continuous and deadly along the whole line. Hancock attacked with the utmost vigor in what Lee justly calls "repeated and desperate assaults;"* but the Confederates, seeking what cover the ground afforded,

* "The enemy subsequently concentrated against General Hill, who, with his own and Wilcox's divisions, successfully resisted the repeated and desperate assaults."—Lee: Dispatch, May 5.

From General Hancock's official report I extract the following details of this action:

"At a quarter past four P. M. General Getty moved forward on the right and left of the Orange plankroad, having received direct orders from General Meade to commence the attack without waiting for me. Finding that General Getty had met the enemy in great force, I ordered General Birney to advance his command (his own and Mott's divisions) to support the movement of Getty at once. Although the formation I had directed to be made before carrying out my instructions to advance was not yet completed, General Birney immediately moved forward on General Getty's right and left—one section of Ricketts' battery, Company F, First Pennsylvania Artillery, moving down the plankroad just in rear of the infantry. The fight became very fierce at once, the lines of battle were exceedingly close, the musketry continuous and deadly along the entire line. Half-past four P. M., Carroll's brigade of Gibbon's division advanced to the support of Getty's right, on the right of the plank road; and a few minutes later, Owen's brigade of Gibbon's division was also ordered into action in support of General Getty on the right and left of the Orange plankroad. During this contest, the Irish Brigade, commanded by Colonel Smythe of the Second Del-

and hidden by the forest, met the advancing lines with such well-delivered and murderous volleys that Hancock was every time checked. Mott's division gave way, and Brigadier-General Alexander Hays, in going to repair the break in the line, was shot dead while gallantly leading his command in the thickest of the fight.*

The heavy firing borne to the ears of Generals Grant and Meade at the Old Wilderness Tavern, attested the severity of the work that was going on at this important junction of roads. It was judged that the pressure on Hancock might be relieved by sending a force from Warren's corps to strike southward through the forest and fall upon the flank and rear of Hill. Wadsworth's division and the brigade of Baxter were accordingly dispatched late in the afternoon to execute this movement. But great difficulty was experienced by these troops in making their way through the thicket, and it was dark by the time Wadsworth got his force in position to apply it in the manner directed. His troops lay on their arms during the night where darkness found them, which was in contact with the skirmishers on Hill's left flank—a situation in which Wadsworth might attack with much advantage the following morning.†

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aware Volunteers, and Colonel Brooke, Fourth Brigade, both of Barlow's division, Second Corps, attacked the enemy vigorously on his right and drove his line for some distance. The Irish Brigade was heavily engaged, and although four-fifths of its numbers were recruits, it behaved with great steadiness and gallantry, losing largely in killed and wounded. The section of Ricketts' battery which moved down the plankroad when Birney and Getty attacked, suffered severely in men and horses. It was captured at one time during the fight, but was retaken by detachments from the Fourteenth Indiana and Eighth Ohio Volunteers of Carroll's brigade. It was then withdrawn, and replaced by a section of Dow's Sixth Maine battery."

* Meade: Report of the Rapidan Campaign.

† The column under command of General Wadsworth moved about four o'clock. After entering the woods southeast of the Lacy House, line of battle was formed. After proceeding half a mile the skirmish line of the enemy was driven in and steadily pushed until it was too dark to see, when the troops halted in line of battle for the night. The line had gradually swung round so as to be facing more nearly south, between Widow Tapp's [see map] and the Brock road—the left being perhaps half a mile from the Brock road.

Hancock continued his unavailing efforts to drive Hill till eight o'clock, when night shutting down on the darkling woods ended the struggle. The combatants lay on their arms, mutually exhausted after the fierce wrestle; and many corpses lay in the tangled brakes and bushes, evidences of the bloody work done that day.

The action of the 5th of May was not so much a battle as the fierce grapple of two mighty wrestlers suddenly meeting. But it had determined that there should be a battle, and it had drawn the relative positions of the combatants. The moving Union columns, almost surprised in *flagrante delicto*, had succeeded in making a junction; and if it had been Lee's purpose to interpose between them, he was foiled in this. The antagonist armies and their commanders were in the highest mettle, both were filled with aggressive ardor, and the proof of this was that each determined to attack on the morrow. Yet each felt that in the encounter there would be need of all his strength, and whatever corps of each had not yet come up were urgently ordered forward. On the Union side all had already arrived, saving the Ninth Corps under General Burnside, who had been instructed to hold position on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad for twenty-four hours after the army had crossed the Rapidan. This corps was at once summoned to the front, and early on the morning of the 6th, after a rapid and arduous march, it reached the field and took position in the interval between Warren's corps on the turnpike and Hancock's on the plankroad. The Union line of battle, as formed by dawn of the 6th, was therefore in the order of Sedgwick on the right next Warren, and Burnside and Hancock on the left. It ran north and south, faced westward, and was in extent about five miles.

On the side of the Confederates, Longstreet's corps, which at the opening of the campaign had to march up from Gordonsville (distant forty miles), had not been up to participate in the action of the 5th; but that night it bivouacked not far off, and its presence early in the impending battle was

assured. Lee maintained the same ground he had held the day before—Ewell on the left across the turnpike, and Hill on the right across the plankroad; but whereas, on that day, owing to the suddenness with which they were precipitated into action, there had been no connection between them, they now extended to meet each other and form a continuous front. It was appointed that Longstreet on his arrival should come upon the right flank of Hill's corps.

The field where the first rencounter of the armies had taken place, and where it was now decreed the battle should be fought, was that region known as "The Wilderness." I have already touched on some of the characteristic features of this region in the recital of the action of the 5th; but it is necessary that these should be fully realized in order to gain a just appreciation of this singular and terrible combat. It is impossible to conceive a field worse adapted to the movements of a grand army. The whole face of the country is thickly wooded, with only an occasional opening, and intersected by a few narrow wood-roads. But the woods of the Wilderness have not the ordinary features of a forest. The region rests on a belt of mineral rocks, and, for above a hundred years, extensive mining has here been carried on.* To

* The mines of this region were first worked in the early part of the last century by Alexander Spottswood, then governor of Virginia. Colonel Byrd, in his "Progress of the Mines," published in 1732, gives many interesting details of this region, from which it appears that Germanna, now known only as a ford, was once a place of some celebrity. "This famous town [Germanna] consists of Colonel Spottswood's enchanted castle on one side of the street and a baker's dozen of ruinous tenements on the other, where so many German families had dwelt some years ago; but are now removed ten miles higher, in the fork of the Rappahannock, to land of their own. In the evening the noble colonel came home from his mines. I let him understand that besides the pleasure of paying him a visit, I came to be instructed by so great a master in the mystery of making iron, wherein he had led the way, and was the Tubal Cain of Virginia. He corrected me a little there, by assuring me that he was not only the first in this country, but the first in North America, who had erected a regular furnace." Another writer, of a still earlier period, thus speaks: "Beyond Colonel Spottswood's furnace, above the Falls of Rappahannock River, within view of the vast mountains, he has founded a town called

feed the mines the timber of the country for many miles around had been cut down, and in its place there had arisen a dense undergrowth of low-limbed and scraggy pines, stiff and bristling chinkapins, scrub-oaks, and hazel. It is a region of gloom and the shadow of death. Manœuvring here was necessarily out of the question, and only Indian tactics told. The troops could only receive direction by a point of the compass; for not only were the lines of battle entirely hidden from the sight of the commander, but no officer could see ten files on each side of him. Artillery was wholly ruled out of use; the massive concentration of three hundred guns stood silent, and only an occasional piece or section could be brought into play in the road-sides. Cavalry was still more useless. But in that horrid thicket there lurked two hundred thousand men, and through it lurid fires played; and, though no array of battle could be seen, there came out of its depths the crackle and roll of musketry like the noisy boiling of some hell-caldron that told the dread story of death. Such was the field of the battle of the Wilderness; and General Grant appointed that at five o'clock of the morning the fight should be renewed. Combinations or grand tactics there were none; the order of battle was simple, and was to all the corps—Attack along the whole line.

It is a striking proof of the aggressive determination animating both commanders, that Lee, also, that morning had resolved upon assuming the offensive. His plan was to deliver an overwhelming blow on the left of the Union army —a point well chosen, since this was Grant's strategic flank, the carrying of which would force him back against the Rapidan. It was, however, impossible to strike this blow effectively until Longstreet's corps, which had not yet arrived,

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Germanna, from some Germans sent over by Queen Anne. Beyond this is seated the colony of Germans of Palatines, with allowance of good quantity of rich land, who thrive very well and live happily, and entertain generously." Hugh Jones: "Present Condition of Virginia," 1724. The latter syllable of the name Spotts*wood*, latinized forms with the former part the name of the county of Spottsylvania.

should come up. To distract attention, therefore, Lee resolved to make a threatening demonstration against the Union right. Thus it came about, that fifteen minutes before the time appointed by Grant for the general attack, a sudden outburst of musketry from the direction of Sedgwick announced that Lee was beforehand with him in offensive purposes.

The attack was made upon Seymour's brigade on the extreme right, involved the whole of Ricketts' division, and then Wright's. But, as has been seen, it had no serious character, and was not pushed with much vigor; so that Sedgwick not only yielded no ground, but was able to push his front forward a few hundred yards. At the same time, Warren and Hancock joined in the general attack. But as the left was the point at which, as by common consent, the fiercest dispute took place, I shall first of all set forth the sequence of events on that flank.

When, at five o'clock, Hancock opened his attack by an advance of his two right divisions under Birney, together with Getty's command,* and pushed forward on the right and left of the Orange plankroad, the onset was made with such vigor, and Lee was yet so weak on that flank, owing to the non-arrival of Longstreet,† that, for a time, it seemed as though a great victory would then be snatched. At the same time that Hancock opened a direct attack, Wadsworth's division,‡ which had the evening before secured a position to assail Hill's flank, took up the action, and fought its way across that part of the Second Corps posted on the right of the plank-

* The brigades of Owen and Carroll of Gibbon's division supported.

† It would appear, also, that even Hill's corps was not all up; for Anderson's division had been left behind to guard certain fords of the Rapidan, and did not arrive for some hours.

‡ "During the night I sent instructions to General Wadsworth to form his line northeast and southwest, and go straight through. Precisely at the hour the fighting began. Wadsworth fought his way entirely across the Second Corps front to the south side of the plankroad, and wheeling round commenced driving the enemy up the plankroad."—Warren: Notes on the Battle of the Wilderness.

road. The combined attack overpowered the Confederates, and after an hour's severe contest, the whole hostile front was carried, and Hill's divisions under Wilcox and Heth were driven for a mile and a half through the woods under heavy loss and back on the trains and artillery and the Confederate headquarters.* But here, whether the significance of the success was not understood, or because further advance was rendered impossible, owing to the disintegration of Hancock's line in advancing so far through the thickets, a halt was cried, and a readjustment of the line made. This pause, as will presently appear, forfeited all the gain; for, at the height of Hill's confused retreat, Anderson's division, soon followed by the head of Longstreet's column, came on the ground. When, therefore, about nine o'clock, after an interval of two hours, taken up in the rehabilitation of the line, Hancock, who had been re-enforced by Stevenson's division of the Ninth Corps, in addition to Wadsworth's division, resumed the advance, he met a bitter opposition, and though furious fighting took place, he gained no more headway.†

That it was Longstreet that thus met him, General Hancock did not, at this time, know. Indeed, Longstreet's attack had been anticipated in a very different direction; and the manner in which this expectation influenced Hancock's dispositions is a striking illustration of the kind of agencies that effect the issue of battles. It was known during the night that Longstreet's corps, which had not been in the previous day's action, was marching up from the direction of Orange Court-house, to reach the field by a route that would strike Hancock's left flank and rear. That officer was cautioned officially

* I use here no stronger language than that employed by General Longstreet, in a description he gave the writer of the situation of affairs at the moment of his arrival.

† The advance was made by Birney's and Mott's divisions, and Webb's, Carroll's, and Owen's brigades of Gibbon's division, all of the Second Corps, together with Stevenson's division of the Ninth and Wadsworth's of the Fifth. Hancock had been so strengthened that now he had with him nearly one-half the army.

to beware of this.* It was with the view to provide against this menace that, in attacking in the morning, Hancock advanced only his right divisions, and allowed his left, under Gibbon, to remain on the original line on the Brock road; so that, in throwing forward his right, he pivoted on his left, and, with that flank, clung to the road on which it was expected Longstreet would come up. Now, at the time Hancock began his attack, Longstreet was really making the movement indicated; but the assault was executed with such energy, and so completely disrupted Hill, that Lee found it necessary to recall Longstreet from his flank march, and bring him forward to meet the more pressing necessity in front. Hancock, however, unaware of this, still looked nervously to his left; and though, after the successful advance of his right, he directed General Gibbon to advance with Barlow's division, and press the enemy's right, the approach of Longstreet's corps on the flank gave such constant apprehension, that Gibbon advanced only one brigade (that of Colonel Frank), which, after an obstinate resistance, succeeded in forming connection with the left of the advanced line.† This apprehension was, throughout the forenoon, constantly revived and strengthened by various incidents that befell. Thus, about eight o'clock, an outburst of fight was heard considerably to the left, where Sheridan, with a division of horse, had engaged the enemy; but, instead of his encountering Longstreet, as Hancock supposed, it turned out to be Stuart's cavalry he had met. Some time after this, there came in a report that infantry was moving up on the Brock road from the direction of Todd's Tavern, about two miles from Hancock's left; and as

* Hancock: Report of the Battle of the Wilderness.

† "I do not know why my order to attack with Barlow's division was not more fully carried out; but it was probably owing to the apprehended approach of Longstreet's corps on my left about that time. But had my left advanced, as directed by me in several orders, I believe the overthrow of the enemy would have been assured. At all events, an attack on the enemy's right by the troops of Barlow's division would have prevented the turning of the left of Mott's division, which occurred later in the day."—Hancock's Report.

he knew he had no infantry in that quarter, he again supposed it to be Longstreet, and took measures to meet him.* But the reported column of infantry proved to be a body of several hundred Union convalescents, who had come to the front by way of Chancellorsville, and were now following the route of the Second Corps around by Todd's Tavern. Thus it was that the suspicion, continually reawakened, that Longstreet was moving to turn Hancock's left flank, resulted in paralyzing a large number of his best troops—troops that would otherwise have gone into action at the time when the disruption of Hill's force opened a rare opportunity for a decisive blow.

The contest that signalized Longstreet's arrival on Hancock's front, and restored the integrity of the shattered Confederate right, now died away; and for some hours, up to nearly noon, there was a lull. During this time, Longstreet's troops continued to arrive; and when, at length, his line had acquired breadth and weight by the incoming force, it was advanced, and Hancock's troops, which had first halted, now began to feel a heavy pressure. The attack first fell on the left of the advanced line, held by the brigade of Frank. This force Longstreet's troops fairly overran; and, brushing it away, they struck the left of Mott's division, which was, in turn, swept back in confusion; and though Hancock endeavored, by swinging back his left, and forming line along the plankroad, to secure the advanced position still held by his right, it was found impossible to do so, and he had to content himself with rallying and re-forming the troops on the original line, along the Brock road, from which they had advanced in the morning. Wadsworth, on the right of Hancock, opposed the most heroic efforts to the onset of the enemy; but after several ineffectual charges, his troops broke into the retreat; and while striving to rally them, that patriotic and high-

* Brooke's brigade, of Barlow's division, was sent out on the Brock road to the extreme left, where a strong breastwork was constructed across the road, and Leasure's brigade, of the Ninth Corps, and Eustis' brigade, of the Sixth Corps, were held ready to support.

souled gentleman and brave soldier received a bullet in his head, and died within the enemy's lines the following day.

But in the very fury and tempest of the Confederate onset the advance was of a sudden stayed by a cause at the moment unknown. This afterwards proved to have been the fall of the head of this attack.

Longstreet had made his dispositions for a decisive blow; for while advancing one force in front, he sent another to move round Hancock's left and lay hold of the Brock road. At the time the Union troops were giving ground, and the Confederates were pushing on, that officer, with his staff, rode forward in front of his column; when suddenly confronting a portion of his own flanking force, the cavalcade was mistaken for a party of Union horsemen, and received a volley under which Longstreet fell, severely wounded.* General Lee then took formal charge of that part of the field; but it was four hours—that is, about four o'clock of the afternoon—before he could get things in hand to carry out the intent of his lieutenant. Before detailing the sequel of events at the left, it will, however, be proper to glance rapidly at what had meanwhile taken place on the centre and right of the field.

The opening of the combat on the right, under Sedgwick, has been already seen; and the history of what subsequently passed here can only be told in the heavy losses sustained by the Sixth Corps, in unavailing attempts to carry intrenched positions. On Sedgwick's left was Warren's corps, placed to the right and left of the Orange turnpike; but as Hancock's needs had compelled the detachment to his assistance of two divisions of the Fifth Corps, the remaining two divisions (Griffin's and Crawford's) held a simply defensive attitude.

* General Longstreet stated to the writer that he saw they were his own men, but in vain shouted to them to cease firing. He also expressed, with great emphasis, his opinion of the decisive blow he would have inflicted had he not been wounded. "I thought," said he, "that we had another Bull Run on you, for I had made my dispositions to seize the Brock road." But on my pointing out that Hancock's left had not advanced, but remained on the original line covering that road, he admitted that that altered the complexion of affairs.

Severe skirmishing took place throughout the day; but the enemy in front was found to be well intrenched, and no impression was made on his position.

In the action of the previous day, there had existed a considerable interval between Warren's corps on the turnpike and Hancock's corps on the plankroad. It was designed that Burnside's command should advance through this opening; and the point on which his attack was directed gave high hopes of a successful issue. Advancing through the woods in the morning, the enemy was encountered on a wooded crest near the plankroad. An attack on this position was not thought advisable, and the corps was moved further to the left. It was not till afternoon, and subsequent to Hancock's repulse, that it became engaged with the enemy. No decisive result followed, and towards evening Burnside fell back and intrenched. *

The long lull that had followed the successful attack of Longstreet upon Hancock gave the latter time to thoroughly re-establish his position, now strengthened by fresh troops sent to him by General Meade. His immediate front was cleared by a well-executed movement made by a brigade under Colonel Leasure, across its whole extent from left to right,† and he was prepared to meet the enemy, who, how-

* Leasure's brigade belonged to the Ninth Corps, and held position towards the left of Hancock's line, under the immediate command of General Gibbon. Under orders from Hancock, Colonel Leasure formed his command at right angles with Hancock's front: his right, at about one hundred paces from the breastworks, swept across the whole front of Mott's and Birney's divisions, and crossed the Orange plankroad to the right of Hancock's line, encountering in his progress what he supposed to be a brigade of the enemy, which fell back in disorder without engaging him.

† "The head of the column passed the Lacy House at daybreak. Nothing was encountered until reaching the field this side of Wilderness Run; here the flankers on the right became engaged with the enemy's skirmishers. As soon as the head of the column emerged into the field, a rebel battery at Tuning's opened on them. Some fifty shots were fired, but no one was hurt. The column halted: a strong skirmish line advanced across the run, up the slope covered with thick pines; and as soon as they showed themselves in the edge of Tuning's field, they received a musketry fire and fell back. Per-

ever, made no demonstration until four o'clock in the afternoon. At that hour, Lee, having gotten well in hand the troops of Longstreet and Hill, made an impetuous assault upon Hancock's intrenched position, pressing up to within less than a hundred yards of his front line. Here the Confederates halted, and continued a long and uninterrupted fire of musketry, which, however, had little effect on the troops behind their substantial breastwork of logs, whence they delivered a sharp fusillade; and the repulse of the Confederate attack would have been easy, but for an accident here occurring. In front of the left of the line a fire had, during the afternoon, sprung up in the woods, and at the time of the attack this had communicated to the log breastworks on that part of the line. At this critical moment they became a mass of flame, which it was found impossible to subdue, and which extended for many hundred yards to the right and left. The intense heat and the smoke, which was driven by the wind directly in the faces of the men, prevented them, or portions of the yet uninjured line, from firing over the parapet. The enemy, taking advantage of this, swept forward; a considerable body of the troops in the first line gave way, and retreated in great disor-

haps one division of the Ninth Corps was deployed in line of battle on the left of the road in the hollow. A long consultation now ensued between Generals Burnside and Park, and Colonel Comstock. No one liked the idea of taking the hill by assault. * * * The idea was entertained that General Crawford was to advance and join on the right of the Ninth Corps; but I explained that if Crawford advanced at all, he would close on the right of Griffin, and advance up the pike away from the Ninth Corps. More than an hour was lost doing nothing, while the firing over by Wadsworth grew very heavy. They finally concluded to abandon this route, and move further to the left, aiming at a point half-way between Tuning's and Tap's. The corps became engaged there about noon, with no decisive result, and fell back towards evening and intrenched."—Notes of a Staff Officer.

Regarding the anticipated effect of Burnside's movements, General Hancock uses the following language:

"I am not aware what movements were made by General Burnside near Parker's Store, on the morning of the 6th; but I experienced no relief from the attack I was informed he would make across my front—a movement long and anxiously waited for."

der towards Chancellorsville, and the enemy, pressing into the breastworks, crowned it with their standards. Yet the victory was short-lived; it was only the more adventurous that had penetrated the breastworks (inside of which, indeed, a few were killed), and these were quickly driven out by a forward rush of Carroll's brigade. Lee then abandoned the attack, in which he had suffered a considerable loss.

This closed the main action of the day; but just before dark, Ewell moved a considerable force around the right flank of the wing held by Ricketts' division of the Sixth Corps, and, in conjunction with a demonstration in front, succeeded in forcing this division back in considerable confusion, making prisoners of Brigadier-Generals Seymour and Shaler, and a considerable number of men. The attack produced a good deal of alarm; but the break was soon repaired, and darkness prevented the Confederates following up the success of this sally.

When the dawn of the third day (Saturday, May 7th) came to light up the dark hollows of the Wilderness, neither army showed any disposition to take the offensive. The terrible conflict of the past two days had left both combatants bleeding and exhausted, and the events of the 7th were confined to a severe but indecisive combat between the opposing cavalry at Todd's Tavern.

The heavy losses Lee had suffered in the battle, in which he had acted on the aggressive quite as much as his antagonist, admonished a more cautious conduct; and though he was willing to be assailed, he dared not venture further attack. When, therefore, the skirmish line was thrown forward on the morning of the 7th, the Confederates were found standing at bay behind their intrenchments.*

* General Grant appears to have drawn an inference from Lee's remaining behind his intrenchments on the morning of the 7th, which facts do not justify. "From this," says he, "it was evident to my mind that the two days' fighting had satisfied him of his inability to further maintain the contest in the open field, notwithstanding his advantage of position."—Report of Operations, p. 6.

But the like reasons made Grant equally little minded to renew the assault. Yet the situation was such, that it was necessary either to go forward or to go backward.

Had General Grant chosen to adopt the latter course, he would not have been without precedents. But this step was not only unbefitting his position—it was altogether contrary to his bent of mind. There is much in that commander's temper that recalls that old marshal whom his soldiers named "Marshal Forwarts;" and as Blucher, in the great campaign in France, that ended in the capitulation of Napoleon, would hear of nothing but marching straight on Paris, so Grant, his eyes fixed immovably on Richmond as the goal of all his efforts, the prize he resolved to seize, through whatever seas of blood he might have to wade, pronounced the magisterial word, "Forward!" When darkness came, the columns began their march for Spottsylvania.

The battle of the Wilderness is scarcely to be judged as an ordinary battle. It will happen in the course as in the beginning of every war, that there occur actions in which ulterior purposes, and the combinations of a military programme play very little part; but which are simply trials of strength. The battle of the Wilderness was such a mortal combat—a combat in which the adversaries aimed each, respectively, at a result that should be decisive: Lee to crush the campaign in its inception, by driving the Army of the Potomac across the Rapidan; Grant to *destroy* Lee.

Out of this fierce determination came a close and deadly grapple of the two armies—a battle terrible and indescribable

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It is not entirely clear what the lieutenant-general means by "maintaining the contest in the open field." During the two days' battle, both armies pivoted on intrenchments covering their entire front. From these, one side or the other sallied forth to attack his adversary, who endeavored to receive the attack from behind his breastworks. Lee attacked Grant's force behind intrenched lines, quite as much as Grant attacked Lee's force behind intrenched lines. The real conclusion at which *both* commanders had arrived was, that further assault on these lines was hopeless.

in those gloomy woods. There is something horrible, yet fascinating, in the mystery shrouding this strangest of battles ever fought—a battle which no man could see, and whose progress could only be followed by the ear, as the sharp and crackling volleys of musketry, and the alternate Union cheer and Confederate yell told how the fight surged and swelled. The battle continued two days; yet such was the mettle of each combatant that it decided nothing. It was in every respect a drawn battle; and its only result appeared in the tens of thousands of dead and wounded in blue and gray that lay in the thick woods. The Union loss exceeded fifteen thousand, and the Southern loss was about eight thousand.*

That this result was a grievous disappointment to General Grant will be readily understood, if account be taken of the expectation with which he set out upon the campaign. General Grant at this time shared an opinion commonly entertained in that part of the country where his own successes had been won—the opinion that the Army of the Potomac had never been fought to the uttermost. This belief was, perhaps, natural under the circumstances; for there was much that, to one at a distance, where the peculiar nature of the task given the Army of the Potomac to do was little understood, might inspire this belief. Nevertheless it was fallacious.

Sharing this view, General Grant hoped at one blow to finish the troublesome, and seemingly invulnerable, adversary. And to achieve this end, he made little account of those arts that accomplish results by the direction and combi-

* This estimate of loss is inferential respecting both sides. The tabular statement of casualties in the Army of the Potomac, embodied in the report of General Meade, gives an aggregate of twenty-nine thousand four hundred and ten killed, wounded, and missing, for the whole period between the 5th and 12th of May. But as the losses in the actions subsequent to the Wilderness, and previous to the 12th of May (which was the date of the main battle at Spottsylvania Courthouse), were probably not much over ten thousand, the aggregate of casualties in the Wilderness might perhaps be safely carried up to nearer twenty thousand. In estimating Lee's losses at eight thousand, I proceed on the basis of the aggregate of Confederate casualties during the entire campaign.

nation of forces; for at this period he avowedly despised manœuvring.* His reliance was exclusively on the application of brute masses, in rapid and remorseless blows, or, as he has himself phrased it, in "hammering continuously" It soon appeared, however, that the hammer would itself break on the anvil; and, taught a lesson by this, he was thereafter more disposed to accept whatever aid the resources of strategy afford. Great results, indeed, are seldom won save by the employment of both agencies. A well-considered offensive is never incompatible with so manœuvring as to secure advantageous conditions to strike; and the commander who attempts to renounce these is seldom long in having a costly proof of his error.

Disappointed though he was in the result of the battle, General Grant was, nevertheless, not dismayed nor cast down; but, seizing the masses of his force, he launched them forward to new trials of fortune.

III.

THE LINES OF SPOTTSYLVANIA.

The determination of General Grant to move southward from the Wilderness was formed early on Saturday, the 7th. His purpose was, to plant himself between Lee's army and Richmond, by a movement upon Spottsylvania Courthouse,

* I trust the reader will understand that I do not make this statement at random. It is founded on the testimony of the highest authority, and I may mention an incident that corroborates this statement. Shortly before the opening of the Rapidan campaign, General Meade, in conversation with the lieutenant-general, was telling him that he proposed to manœuvre thus and so; whereupon General Grant stopped him at the word "manœuvre," and said, "Oh! *I never manœuvre.*" This characteristic utterance, which the suavity of biographers might readily pass over in silence, cannot be omitted here; for it is the proof of a frame of mind that essentially influenced the complexion of the campaign. The battle of the Wilderness can hardly be understood, save as the act of a commander who "never manœuvred." It was remarked that he was not so unwilling to avail himself thereafter of this resource.

fifteen miles southeast of the battle-field of the Wilderness. The march of the infantry was not to be begun until after nightfall; but it was necessary to make earlier disposition of the immense trains; and for this purpose, they were withdrawn from the battle-field in the middle of the afternoon, and sent to Chancellorsville, there to park for the night. This movement of the trains apprised the enemy of Grant's withdrawal, but not of his objective; and it was by a mere accident that a Confederate corps marched towards Spottsylvania that night.*

The direct route to Spottsylvania Courthouse is by the Brock road, *via* Todd's Tavern. On this road, the Fifth Corps, under General Warren, was to take the advance, and, by a rapid march, seize Spottsylvania Courthouse. Hancock's corps was to follow on the same line, while the corps of Sedgwick and Burnside were to move on an exterior route, by way of Chancellorsville.† The route of march of Lee, in

* The accident befell in this wise. Lee seeing that Grant was moving off somewhere, but not knowing whether towards Fredericksburg or Spottsylvania, instructed Anderson, now commanding Longstreet's corps, to draw out his corps from the breastworks and camp it in readiness to move to Spottsylvania *in the morning*. Anderson not being able to find a good place to bivouac (the woods being on fire), *began the march that night*, about ten o'clock.

† The following order of march will assist those who desire to study the logistics of this movement:

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC, May 7, 3 P. M.

The following movements are ordered for to-day and to-night:

1st. The trains of the Sixth Corps authorized to accompany the troops will be moved, at four o'clock P. M., to Chancellorsville, and park on the left of the road, and held ready to follow the Sixth Corps during the night march.

2d. The trains of the Fifth Corps authorized to accompany the troops will be moved, at five o'clock P. M., to Chancellorsville, following the trains of the Sixth Corps, and parking with them, and held ready to follow those trains in the movement to-night.

3d. The trains of the Second Corps authorized to accompany the troops will be moved, at six o'clock P. M., to Chancellorsville, and park on the right of the road, and held ready to move at the same hour with the other trains, by way of Furnace's, to Todd's Tavern, keeping clear of the Brock road, which will be used by the troops.

4th. Corps-commanders will send escorts with these trains.

5th. The Reserve Artillery will move at seven o'clock, by way of Chancel-

order to foil his antagonist's design of planting himself between the Confederate army and Richmond, was by the road from Parker's Store to Spottsylvania Courthouse, which runs parallel with the Brock road, and a few miles west thereof. The distance in each case is about equal.*

The vital interest of this turning movement centred in the

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lorsville, Aldrich's, and Piney Branch Church, to the intersection of the road from Piney Branch Church to Spottsylvania Courthouse, and the road from Alsop's to Block House, and park to the rear of the last-named road, so as to give room for the Sixth Corps.

6th. At half-past eight P. M., Major-General Warren, commanding Fifth Corps, will move to Spottsylvania Courthouse, by way of Brock road and Todd's Tavern.

7th. At eight and a half o'clock P. M., Major-General Sedgwick, commanding Sixth Corps, will move, by the pike and plankroad, to Chancellorsville, when he will be joined by the authorized trains of his own corps and those of the Fifth Corps; thence, by way of Aldrich's and Piney Branch Church, to Spottsylvania Courthouse, and the road from Alsop's to Block House. The trains of Fifth Corps will then join the corps at Spottsylvania Courthouse.

8th. Major-General Hancock, commanding Second Corps, will move to Todd's Tavern, by the Brock road, following Fifth Corps closely.

9th. Headquarters during the movement will be along the route of the Fifth and Second corps, and at the close of the movement, near the Sixth.

10th. The pickets of the Fifth and Sixth corps will be withdrawn at one o'clock A. M., and those of the Second at two A. M., and will follow the routes of their respective corps.

11th. The cavalry now under the command of Colonel Hammond will be left by General Sedgwick at the Old Wilderness Tavern, and upon being informed by General Hancock of the withdrawal of this corps and pickets, will follow that corps.

12th. Corps-commanders will see that the movements are made with punctuality and promptitude.

13th. Major-General Sheridan, commanding cavalry corps, will have a sufficient force, on the approaches from the right, to keep the corps-commanders advised in time of the appearance of the enemy.

14th. It is understood that General Burnside's command will follow the Sixth Corps.

By command of MAJOR-GENERAL MEADE.

* General Grant (Report, p. 7) states, that "the enemy having become apprised of our movement, *and having the shorter line*, was enabled to reach there first." But if there be any difference in the distance of the routes travelled by the rival armies, that of Lee was rather the longer.

PLAN OF THE BATTLE
AND LINES
OF
SPOTTSYLVANIA
COURTHOUSE
Fought May 8th – 21st 1864.
Scale of Miles
Intrenched Lines
Union
Confederate
Wid. Sea
Tally's Mill
Watt
Chewning
Gladg Run
Hart
Graves
HANCOCK
Jones
WARREN
Alsop
Perry Spindle
Old C.H.
Dr. Hicks
Perry
Dr. Dirt
Wrigg
Scott
Po River
Harrison
Mc Cool
Brown
B. S. Shop
Cruchfield
Mc Kinney
EWELL
SPOTTSYLVANIA
C.H.
LONGSTREET
Dabney
Landrum
BURNSIDE
Strong
Crisman
Quisenbury
WRIGHT
WARREN
Beverly
HANCOCK
Harris
Clark
Jett
Ny River
Gayle
Anderson
To Fredericksburg

march of Warren to seize Spottsylvania Courthouse. But though that officer threw the utmost ardor into the execution of this purpose, it was, by causes now to be mentioned, first retarded and finally foiled.

The advance of Warren's corps was begun at nine P. M. of the 7th. Reaching Todd's Tavern, he was delayed for an hour and a half by the cavalry escort of General Meade blocking the way. On advancing two miles beyond that point, at about three A. M. of the 8th, he was again detained by the cavalry division of General Merritt, which had the day before, and up to a late hour of the night, been engaged in fighting and driving the cavalry of Stuart, who had been sent by Lee to hold the Brock road, and who still barred further advance.* Merritt, after two or three hours of ineffectual effort, gave way to Warren, who advanced to clear his own path. It was by this time broad daylight. A couple of brigades of the advance division, under Robinson, were deployed in line of battle, while the remainder of the corps followed in column. Numerous barricades obstructed the road, and considerable loss occurred in removing these, several pioneers being killed and wounded while chopping. Finally, at eight A. M. of the 8th, the column emerged from the woods into a clearing, two miles north of Spottsylvania Courthouse.† Beyond this are woods again, and then the ground rises into the Spottsylvania Ridge.

Forming in line, Robinson's division advanced over the plain. Thus far, only Stuart's dismounted troopers had been encountered, and no other opposition was anticipated; but when half-way across the field, and on the point of rising the

* "At nine P. M., the army began to move towards Spottsylvania Courthouse, the Fifth Corps having the advance on the Brock road. We were delayed about an hour and a half by the cavalry escort of General Meade, and on reaching a point two miles beyond Todd's Tavern, were retarded about three hours by Merritt's cavalry endeavoring to clear the way for us. They gave it up about six A. M. (May 8th), and got out of our way."—Warren: Notes on the Rapidan Campaign.

† This clearing will be noted on the accompanying map as that marked "Alsop's."

crest, the troops were met by a savage musketry fire from infantry. Owing to their severe experiences in the Wilderness, and the night march, without rest, the men were in an excited and almost frightened condition, and the tendency to stampede was so great, that General Warren had been compelled to go in front of the leading brigade. When, therefore, they received a fire in front from the redoubtable foe they had left in the Wilderness, the line wavered and fell back in some confusion. General Robinson was, at the same time, severely wounded, which left the troops without their commander at a critical moment, and they were with some difficulty rallied and re-formed in the woods back of the open plain. Griffin's division, which advanced on the right of Robinson, soon afterwards received the same fire, with a like result.* During this episode, Crawford's division had come up. It succeeded in driving the Confederates out of the woods on Griffin's left;† and Wadsworth's division (under General Cut-

* It will be observed on the map that the road forks at Alsop's. Robinson took to the left, and Griffin to the right; the latter, forming Bartlett's brigade in line of battle in a ravine below Alsop's, advanced, with Ayres' and Sweitzer's brigades on the road. Of Bartlett's brigade, the Eighty-third Pennsylvania and Forty-fourth New York formed the first line, and the First Michigan and Eighteenth Massachusetts the second. "The Eighty-third Pennsylvania fought hand to hand with the Confederates, and pulled prisoners out of the works, and brought them to the rear; but the enemy, seeing no supports coming up, got a flank fire on my right, from the fact of Robinson's division not pushing up in line. The enemy attacking at the same time in front caused me to abandon my position, and fall back of the second line, which was then formed, with Colonel Sweitzer's brigade on the left, and General Ayres' on the right."—Bartlett: Notes on the Rapidan Campaign.

"It so happened that Ayres' men in the road had good cover, the road being sunken about three feet below the level. They held their ground, thus affording a rallying point for Bartlett's men; and in a short time the line was re-established, through the personal exertions of Generals Griffin, Ayres, and Bartlett. They advanced a little way further, and held the line our corps occupied while north of Spottsylvania."—Notes of a Staff-Officer.

† Crawford double-quicked into the woods, and drove the enemy entirely back, the Confederates leaving their dead and wounded on the field. "The enemy encountered at this point was Barksdale's Mississippi brigade; and prisoners taken said they had travelled all night to hurry in there, and that the divisions of McLaws and Anderson were right behind."—Crawford: Notes on the Rapidan Campaign.

ler) also arriving, drove them out of the woods on his right. A line for the whole corps was then taken up, very close to the enemy, and the troops fell to intrenching of their own accord.

The force encountered before Spottsylvania Courthouse was the head of Longstreet's column, which, having left the Wilderness battle-field almost simultaneously with Warren's setting out, had hurried forward towards the threatened point, and, being favored by the delays that had befallen Warren, reached it in time to bar further progress. It is probable that a vigorous attack by an adequate force, any time during that day, would have carried the position; for the Confederate army was but in process of arrival, and the defences, being such as were improvised on the spot, were not formidable. But there were various causes that prevented this. The task was too much for the Fifth Corps alone; and when, in the afternoon, Sedgwick came up with the Sixth Corps, and took command of the field, there was much delay in determining the dispositions for attack. Moreover, Hancock's corps, which followed Warren's route from the Wilderness, and was designed to be within supporting distance, was, owing to the occupation of the road by other troops, halted in the morning, midway of the march, at Todd's Tavern; and, later, events so shaped themselves, that Hancock was detained all day at Todd's Tavern by General Meade, to meet an anticipated attempt of Lee to fall upon the rear of the Union column.*

* At Todd's Tavern, the Brock road is intersected by a road (the Catharpin road) that connects the routes on which the rival armies were moving; and as hostile parties made their appearance close to the Union line of march, this caused General Meade to retain Hancock's division all day at Todd's Tavern, though one division (that of Gibbon) was in the afternoon sent forward towards Spottsylvania Courthouse. To observe the Catharpin road against any hostile approach, Miles' brigade of Hancock's corps, with a brigade of Gregg's cavalry and a battery of artillery, moved out in the afternoon, and took up a position within a mile of Corbyn's Bridge. This Miles held, meeting only an artillery fire, till he was recalled, late in the afternoon. While retiring, he was assailed by Mahone's division of Hill's corps; but Miles, with much skill, repulsed the attack. It would probably have sufficed to retain only a small masking force, such as that of Miles. In this case Hancock would have been able to push on to the critical front. His retention at Todd's Tavern was very unfortunate, and

To return to the front of operations. Sedgwick having joined Warren with a part of his corps, resolved, late in the afternoon, to assault the position with such force as was available. But much time was lost, and it was evening before any thing was done. A partial attack was then made by a New Jersey brigade,* but it resulted in nothing. An advance was, however, made soon afterwards by Crawford's division, with better fortune. It happened that a body of troops belonging to Ewell's corps was marching in by the flank, and coming unexpectedly upon Crawford's force, it was driven back for a mile in confusion, losing a hundred prisoners and a flag. Had the attack been made in stronger force, as was first intended, the best results might have been expected.†

The operations of the day left the Confederates in possession of Spottsylvania Courthouse. Lee, in fact, had succeeded in planting his army across Grant's line of march; and having drawn upon the Spottsylvania Ridge a bulwark of defence, he was able, for twelve days, to hold the Army of the Potomac in check, and exact another heavy dole of blood.

The army was all brought into position on a line in front of Spottsylvania on the following day, Monday, the 9th, and the cavalry under Sheridan was dispatched on a grand raid to cut Lee's railroad communications. Sedgwick's corps took post on the left of Warren, and Burnside's on the left of Sedgwick, forming the left of the army Hancock came up from Todd's Tavern, and, moving to the right, took position on high ground overlooking the valley of the River Po, which, circling southward of Spottsylvania Courthouse, heads northward to the west of that place. Hancock formed the right of

must be accounted rather timid generalship; for the army, having been cut loose from the Wilderness, should have been pushed to Spottsylvania with the utmost vigor. The situation was such as to present quite as much danger to the head of the column as to its rear; and had Warren gained Spottsylvania Courthouse, his position, with nothing within supporting distance, would have been very critical.

* This brigade belonged to Neill's division of the Sixth Corps.

† Notes of a Staff-Officer.

the army. Aside from the movements to take up position, the day was passed in quiet. The Confederate sharp-shooters were, however, very active, and early in the day their deadly aim brought down an illustrious victim in the person of General Sedgwick, the beloved chief of the Sixth Corps, who was shot while standing in the breastworks along his line. and almost instantly expired. The loss of this lion-hearted soldier caused the profoundest grief among his comrades, and throughout the army, which felt it could better have afforded to sacrifice the best division. General Wright succeeded to the command.

During the afternoon a Confederate wagon-train was observed filing along the road leading into Spottsylvania opposite Hancock's position. That officer was directed to make a movement across the Po, partly with the hope of capturing some of the train. Accordingly, towards evening of the 9th, the Second Corps forced a crossing of the stream, the south bank of which was observed by but a small force. The passage was effected with entire success, in face of many difficulties of ground; but night came on before the movement could be brought to a head. Next morning, the 10th, Hancock pushed forward the development of his operation, and, at the same time, bridged the stream at the points at which his force had crossed. The Confederate train had all been safely retired within Spottsylvania Courthouse; so that the continuance of the enterprise was without any very well-defined object. The Po, at Hancock's point of passage, runs nearly eastward; but near Spottsylvania Courthouse it turns sharply southward. It therefore once more crossed his line of advance;* and it was observed that the enemy was in force behind intrenchments on its eastern bank, covering the approaches to Spottsylvania Courthouse. The Po is here crossed by a wooden bridge two miles west of the courthouse. But the passage was not practicable, as all

* Hancock, after crossing the Po, struck what is called the Block House road, which crosses the Po on a covered bridge two miles west of Spottsylvania.

access was commanded by the enemy. Hancock, however, succeeded in throwing Brooke's brigade across the stream some distance above, and was proceeding to develop the enemy's strength, when suddenly the movement was suspended by General Meade. While Hancock's movement was in progress that morning, it had been determined to make an attack on the enemy on Warren's front and on that of the Sixth Corps, and General Hancock was ordered to withdraw two divisions from the south side of the Po, to assist the proposed assault.

In obedience to this order, the divisions of Gibbon and Birney were retired, the rear of the latter being assailed in the act. There then remained only the division of Barlow, and as the enemy at this moment showed a disposition to attack, Hancock was instructed to withdraw this also.

The order was given just as Barlow's skirmishers were being driven in, at two P. M. The operation immediately became one of great delicacy; for after, by skilful dispositions, two brigades of the division had been withdrawn from the front, the enemy, encouraged by what he deemed a forced retreat, made a very vigorous assault on the two remaining brigades, under Colonels Brooke and Brown. He, however, met so deadly and determined a fire from these fine brigades that he was repulsed with heavy loss. During the heat of the contest the woods in the rear of the troops, and between them and the river, took fire; and in the midst of these appalling perils, with a fierce foe in its front, and a burning forest in its rear, the force, after checking the advance of the enemy by several stubborn stands, was retired across the Po. This was not accomplished without heavy loss, and many of the wounded perished in the flames.* The remarkable coolness and steadiness of the men alone saved them from a great disaster. One gun, the first ever lost by the Second Corps, had to be abandoned in consequence of being sunk in a marsh. Miles' brigade crossed last, taking up the ponton-bridge and destroying the other.

* Hancock: Report of Spottsylvania.

This affair, though illustrating the steady valor of the troops, was an unfortunate one in every respect. It was undertaken without any very well-defined military object, and abandoned under circumstances unfavorable to the spirit of the troops, and highly encouraging to the enemy.*

The point against which the attack (to assist in which the Second Corps had been retired across the Po) was designed to be made, was a hill held by the enemy in front of Warren's line.† This was, perhaps, the most formidable point along the enemy's whole front. Its densely wooded crest was crowned by earthworks, while the approach, which was swept by artillery and musketry fire, was rendered more difficult and hazardous by a heavy growth of low cedars, mostly dead, the long bayonet-like branches of which, interlaced and pointing in all directions, presented an almost impassable barrier to the advance of a line of battle.‡

The attack of this position had already been essayed during the day by troops both of the Second and Fifth corps, and with most unpromising results.§ When Hancock's divisions joined the Fifth, an assault was made by the troops of both corps at five o'clock; but it met a very bloody repulse. The men struggled bravely against an impossible task,

* This action was regarded by the Confederates as so considerable a victory that General Heth (commanding a division of Hill's corps), who directed it, issued thereon a congratulatory order, which was indorsed by General Lee. Upon this point General Hancock remarks: "Had not Barlow's fine division, then in full strength, received imperative orders to withdraw, Heth's division would have had no cause for congratulation."—Report of the Second Epoch of the Rapidan Campaign.

† This point, known as Laurel Hill, will be noted on the accompanying map.

‡ Hancock: Report of Operations.

§ Of the Second Corps, the brigades of Webb and Carroll of Gibbon's division, had at eleven A. M. engaged in an attack of this position, in which they suffered severe loss. At three P. M. the divisions of Crawford and Cutler of Warren's corps had also essayed a preliminary assault in order to gain room to form the lines of battle far enough forward for the main attack appointed for five o'clock, when Hancock's divisions should join in. But they also failed in this object and were repulsed with heavy sacrifice.

and even entered the enemy's breastworks at one or two points; but they soon wavered and fell back in confusion and great slaughter. Notwithstanding the disastrous upshot of this assault, the experience of which had taught the troops that the work assigned them was really hopeless,* a second charge was ordered an hour after the failure of the first. The repulse of this was even more complete than that of the former effort; and the loss in the two attacks was between five and six thousand, while it is doubtful whether the enemy lost as many hundreds. Among the killed was Brigadier-General Rice of the Fifth Corps, distinguished for his intrepid bearing on many fields.

On the left of Warren an assault by part of the Sixth Corps met with more success. Upton's brigade, in a vigorous charge, carried the enemy's first line of intrenchments, capturing nine hundred prisoners and several guns. But as this operation was unsupported the advantage could not be maintained, and after nightfall Upton withdrew, leaving the captured guns behind.†

In these operations before the lines of Spottsylvania, General Grant had carried out with much fidelity, but very indifferent success, his own principle of hammering continuously. Better results, however, at length rewarded his persevering efforts under sounder combinations.

Thus far the attacks had been mainly directed against Lee's left. It was now resolved to make a sudden sally against

* This conclusion the men had really formed, and this was precisely one of those cases in which the troops, thus viewing the task given them to do, showed a nervous wavering and a behavior very unlike that which was common with them. "Ward's brigade," says General Hancock, "retired in disorder, until rallied by my own staff and that of General Birney." "Birney's men," writes a staff-officer, "in fact became scared and ran back a quarter of a mile behind some old breastworks." It is only those who know little of the motives which influence troops that would mistake such conduct for pusillanimity.

† General Meade attributes the failure of this operation to the fact that Upton was not supported, as had been designed he should be, by Mott's division of the Second Corps on his left.—Report of the Rapidan Campaign.

his right centre, where it was thought a favorable point of attack presented itself. Hancock's corps was selected for this operation, which was to be supported by the rest of the army. The 11th was passed in preparation for this, and, after dark, the Second Corps was moved over from the right to near the point decided on for the assault. The night was dark and stormy, and Hancock's troops quietly and promptly took position within twelve hundred yards of the position they were to storm—a position of which little or nothing was known.* The direction of advance was determined by the compass. Hancock disposed his troops as follows: Barlow's division in two lines of masses—Brooke's and Miles' brigades in the first line, Brown's and Smythe's brigades in the second line, each regiment forming double column on the centre; Birney formed in two deployed lines on Barlow's right; Mott's division supported Birney, and Gibbon's division was held in reserve.

At half-past four o'clock of Thursday morning, May the 12th, as soon as the faint dawn struggling through a fog gave sufficient light to see the direction of advance, Hancock moved forward. Barlow's division, formed on cleared ground extending up to the enemy's lines, advanced at quick time for several hundred yards—his heavy column without firing a shot marching over the Confederate pickets. When half-way towards the hostile line, the men broke forth into a ringing cheer, and spontaneously taking the double-quick, rolled like a resistless wave into the enemy's works, tearing away with their hands what abatis there was in front of the

* The point to which Hancock's corps moved during the night of the 11th and where it formed for the assault, will be noted on the accompanying map as the "Brown house." From this point to the enemy's lines, some twelve or fifteen hundred yards, the ground ascends sharply and was thickly wooded, with the exception of a clearing about four hundred yards in width, extending up to the Confederate works in front of the "Landrum house" [see map], curving to the right as it approaches the enemy's position. The direction of advance was ascertained only by a line, determined by compass, from Brown's house to a large white house known to be inside the enemy's lines ["McCool's house"—see map]. Such was warfare in Virginia!

intrenchments, and spite of a desperate but brief defence carried the line at all points. Birney's division on Barlow's right, moving through the woods, went over the works almost simultaneously with Barlow's men. Inside the intrenchments there ensued a savage hand-to-hand combat with the bayonet and clubbed muskets; but it was of short duration, and resulted in the capture of near four thousand prisoners, comprising almost the whole of Johnson's division of Ewell's corps (including General Johnson), twenty pieces of artillery, and thirty colors. The remainder of the force fled to the rear in great confusion.*

It happened that the storming column struck the line of works at the point where it formed a salient; so that, having burst open this angle, Hancock had driven in a wedge between the right and centre of the enemy, and was in position to rift asunder the formidable structure in which the Confederate army lay ensconced. But though the tactical dispositions to carry the works were admirable, little provision had been made looking to that critical moment that comes after an assault, when the victory must either be assured by a decisive blow or risk a lapse of all the gain. Flushed with their success, the troops that had made the assault could not be restrained after the capture of the intrenchments, but pushed the flying enemy through the forest towards Spottsylvania Courthouse. Now at the distance of half a mile they came up against a fresh line of breastworks; but it was without order or *ensemble*, and the momentum of the assault had been so broken that on arriving in front of the new line the troops halted.† Here the Confederates quickly rallied on their re-

* Hancock: Report of the Second Epoch of the Campaign of 1864.

† The precise nature of this second line is somewhat difficult to determine. It is certain that a second line had been laid out but not completed. Johnson's artillery had been taken back to this line the day before; but, becoming apprehensive of attack, that officer before daylight ordered it to return. It had just got back, but only two pieces were unlimbered when Hancock's attack was made. But what really stopped Hancock's column was that no adequate preparation had been made to follow up the success, and because the fire and enthusiasm of the troops were not sustained; for when this feeling is kept up great results can be plucked even without orderly tactical dispositions.

serves, and assuming the offensive, threw back their pursuers on the captured line; but Hancock's men, forming on the right and left of the angle of works, resisted the attempt to dislodge them from the position won. Yet its tenure demanded all the force that could be brought up, for the Confederates, re-enforced by heavy masses, began an impetuous assault to retake the lost line: so that it was opportune that at this moment the Sixth Corps reached the ground and relieved the Second Corps from the salient to the right.* Hancock then formed on the left of the angle.

The weight of the pressure brought to bear by Lee for the recapture of the lost line led to the inference that the concentration against the Second and the Sixth corps must be at the expense of a reduction of force in front of the rest of the army —that is, against Burnside on the left, and against Warren on the right—and at eight o'clock these officers were ordered to make a general attack, both to take advantage of the supposed diminution of the force in their front, and to relieve Hancock and Wright. The assault was made as directed, but produced no impression, though it resulted in very heavy loss of life. Seeing, at length, that nothing could be hoped from this, two of Warren's divisions (those of Cutler and Griffin) were detached and sent to aid the Second and Sixth corps, where the angle of works continued to be the prize hotly contended for. Lee seemed to be determined to retake, at any cost, the line wrested from him, and throughout the day made not less than five heavy assaults, each of which was in succession repulsed by the troops of the different corps now concentrated at the point assailed.

Of all the struggles of the war this was perhaps the fiercest and most deadly. Frequently, throughout the conflict, so close was the contest that the rival standards were planted on opposite sides of the breastworks. The enemy's most savage sallies were directed to retake the famous salient which was

* The Sixth Corps came up at six A. M.; its arrival was timely, and the service it performed during the day was of the first importance.

now become an angle of death, and presented a spectacle ghastly and terrible. On the Confederate side of the works lay many corpses of those who had been bayoneted by Hancock's men when they first leaped the intrenchments. To these were constantly added the bravest of those who, in the assaults to recapture the position, fell at the margin of the works, till the ground was literally covered with piles of dead, and the woods in front of the salient were one hideous Golgotha.*

At midnight, after twenty hours of combat, Lee drew back his bleeding lines, and reformed them on his interior position. The loss on the Union side this day was above eight thousand,† and on the Confederate side it must also have been great. But Hancock's success had an excellent moral effect on the army, and was worth all it cost.

Thus the lines of Spottsylvania remained still intact, and General Grant, who might easily have turned the position and manœuvred his antagonist out of it, seemed bent on carrying it by direct attack. Accordingly, during the succeeding week, various movements of corps were made from flank to flank, in the endeavor to find a spot where the lines could be broken.‡ These attempts were skilfully met at every point,

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* I am aware that the language above used may resemble exaggeration; but I speak of that which I personally saw. In the vicious phraseology commonly employed by those who undertake to describe military operations, and especially by those who never witnessed a battle-field, "piles of dead" figure much more frequently than they exist in the reality. The phrase is here no figure of speech, as can be attested by thousands who witnessed the ghastly scene. It may be stated that the musketry fire has had the effect to kill the whole forest within its range, and there is at Washington the trunk of a tree eighteen inches in diameter, which was actually cut in two by the bullets.

† The precise loss in this battle is unknown; but from the 12th to the 21st May it was by official returns ten thousand three hundred and eighty-one. The casualties subsequent to the action of the 12th were, however, in all likelihood not above ten thousand.

‡ No mere general statement can give any idea of the enormous amount of labor, suffering, and privation that befell the troops in these continual shift-

—the Confederates extending their line to correspond with the shiftings of the army; so that wherever attack was essayed, the enemy bristled out in breastworks, and every partial assault made was repulsed. Day by day Grant con-

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ings of the corps from point to point of the long line. I shall in this note indicate some details of the action from day to day.

MAY 13TH.—The battle of the 12th having ended in Lee's retirement to an inner and shorter line, it was resolved to attempt to turn his right flank. With this view, the Fifth Corps, during the night of the 13th, was ordered to march from its position on the extreme right, take post on the extreme left, to the left of Burnside's corps, and assault in conjunction with that corps at four A. M. on the 14th. The march was begun at ten P. M. The wet weather had, however, badly broken up the roads; and the night being one of Egyptian darkness, the move was made with immense difficulty. The route of march was past the Landrum House [see map] to the Ny River, which had to be waded. Across the Ny the route followed no road, but traversed the fields and a piece of woods where a track had been cut. Here, midway of the journey, a dense fog arose and covered the ground, so that not even the numerous fires that had been built to guide the column could be seen. The men, exhausted with wading through the mud knee deep and in the darkness, fell asleep all along the way. In addition to this, the locality where the troops were to take position was quite unknown; and at broad daylight, when the head of the column got to the left of Burnside's corps near the Fredericksburg turnpike [see map], the only troops on hand with which to execute the meditated assault were twelve hundred fagged-out men of Griffin's division. It was seven o'clock before General Cutler got thirteen hundred of his men together.

MAY 14TH.—Skirmishing commenced at six A. M. Off to the southeast of the Beverly House was a high hill—the Jet House [see map], which completely commanded Warren's position. It appeared, however, to be occupied only by a few of the enemy's cavalry; so a small force of Regulars under Lieutenant Colonel Otis was sent to take it. The troopers retired, and Otis commenced to intrench around the house; and while doing so, Upton's brigade of the Sixth Corps—that corps having followed the route of the Fifth—relieved him. Before Upton was fairly established, a large force of the enemy's infantry moved against him, coming from the Courthouse. They made him clear out pell-mell, and were near catching General Meade, who had come upon the ground. The remainder of the Sixth Corps now came up and massed around the Anderson House [see map]. In the afternoon this important position was retaken, or reoccupied (it being doubtful whether the enemy had not abandoned it), by Ayres' brigade, Fifth Corps, in conjunction with troops of Neill's division, Sixth Corps.

MAY 15TH AND 16TH.—The withdrawal of the Fifth and Sixth corps from the right of the Second to make this movement on the left, caused the Second

tinued to throw out towards the left, in the hope of overlapping and breaking in the Confederate right flank: so that from occupying, as the army did on its arrival, a line extending four or five miles to the northwest of Spottsylvania Court-

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Corps to be the right of the whole line. But on the 15th an additional refusal of that flank was made—Hancock being directed to transfer the divisions of Barlow and Gibbon to the Fredericksburg road. Meanwhile, Birney's division remained covering the right of Burnside's corps, and was the right of the army.

For the other corps, the day passed in getting things in order, collecting stragglers, cutting roads, and constant skirmishing. At this time also a new base was opened at Aquia Creek, whither the sick and wounded were sent, and whence supplies and forage, much needed by the army, were drawn.

MAY 17TH.—Hancock received orders to move his command back to the works he had captured on the 12th, and attack the enemy at daylight on the 18th in the intrenchments he then held in front of that position. The Sixth Corps was directed to form on Hancock's right and assail the enemy's line at the same hour. The Ninth Corps was also to participate. The movement commenced at dark of the 17th. The withdrawal of these corps left Warren holding almost the entire front of the army. The night march was a very arduous one.

MAY 18TH.—Before daylight of the 18th the troops were in position for an assault. It had been the intention to catch the enemy napping; but he had at least one eye open, and was covered by acres of impenetrable slashings.

At four A. M. the divisions of Gibbon and Barlow moved forward to the assault in lines of brigades. The artillery was posted in the first line of works, firing during the action over the troops in front. Birney's division and Tyler's division of foot-artillerists, which had recently joined the army, were in reserve. The Confederates held a strong line of intrenchments about half a mile in front of, and parallel to, the works Hancock had stormed on the 12th. Their position was concealed by the forest, and protected by the heaviest kind of abatis. As the troops moved forward, they encountered a severe fire of musketry and artillery, which completely swept the approaches, making great havoc in their ranks. They pressed forward, however, until they arrived at the edge of the abatis, which, with the heavy fire, arrested their progress. Many gallant attempts were made to penetrate the enemy's line, but without success. The Corcoran Legion of Gibbon's division was particularly marked on this occasion, and its losses were very heavy. At ten A. M., finding attack to be hopeless, operations were suspended by General Meade. During the morning, the batteries were opened along the entiro line, the enemy scarcely replying. The only apparent effect was to drive them under cover of their breastworks. Immense waste of ammunition—result *nil*.

MAY 19TH.—During the night of the 18th, Barlow's, Birney's, and Gib-

house it had at the end of ten days assumed a position almost due east of that place, the left resting at a distance of four miles at Massaponax Church.

After twelve days of effort, the carrying of the position was seen to be hopeless; and General Grant, abandoning the attempt, resolved by a turning operation to disengage Lee from a position seen to be unassailable. Preparations for this movement were begun on the afternoon of the 19th; but the enemy observing these, retarded its execution by a bold demonstration against the Union right. It happened that this flank was held by a division of foot artillerists, under General Tyler, posted in an important position, covering the road from Spottsylvania to Fredericksburg, which was the army's main line of communication with its base at the latter point. Ewell crossed the Ny River above the right flank, and moving down, seized the Fredericksburg road and laid hands on an ammunition train coming up. Tyler promptly met this attack and succeeded in driving the enemy from the road and into the woods beyond. The foot artillerists had not before been in battle, but it was found that once under fire, they displayed an audacity surpassing even the old troops. In these murderous wood-fights, the veterans had learned to employ all the Indian devices that afford shelter to the person; but these green battalions, unused to this kind of craft, pushed boldly on, firing furiously. Their loss was heavy, but the honor of the enemy's repulse belongs to them. Shortly afterwards, troops of the Second and Fifth corps

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bon's divisions of the Second Corps moved to the vicinity of Anderson's Mills on the Ny [see map]. Tyler's division remained at the Fredericksburg road near the Harris House [see map]. The assigned position was taken up by Hancock on the morning of the 19th, when he received orders to be ready to move at dark in the direction of Bowling Green. Preparations for this were under way, when, in the afternoon, Ewell attacked Tyler in the manner and with the results described in the text above. At the same time the Second Corps moved, the Ninth Corps also marched to the left and took post on the left of the Sixth Corps. In aid of Ewell's attack, Hill made a demonstration on the Fifth Corps, but without effect.

MAY 20TH.—The turning movement and southward march begin.

coming to their assistance, pursued the fugitives up through the valley of the Po, and made prisoners of several hundred Confederates that had scattered through the woods. This attack somewhat disconcerted the contemplated movement, and delayed it till the following night, May 20th, when the army, moving by the left, once more took up its march towards Richmond.

Before the lines of Spottsylvania the Army of the Potomac had for twelve days and nights engaged in a fierce wrestle, in which it had done all that valor may do to carry a position by nature and art impregnable.

In this contest, unparalleled in its continuous fury, and swelling to the proportions of a campaign, language is inadequate to convey an impression of the labors, fatigues, and sufferings of the troops, who fought by day only to march by night, from point to point of the long line, and renew the fight on the morrow. Above forty thousand men had already fallen in the bloody encounters of the Wilderness and Spottsylvania,* and the exhausted army began to lose its spirit. It was with joy, therefore, that it at length turned its back upon the lines of Spottsylvania.

Before proceeding to follow the Army of the Potomac in its southward march from Spottsylvania Courthouse, it will be proper to glance briefly at the operations of the cavalry under Sheridan during its raid on Lee's communications. This column, consisting of portions of the three divisions of Merritt, Wilson, and Gregg,† cut loose from the Army of the Potomac

* By the official returns, the casualties from the 5th to the 12th of May were twenty-nine thousand four hundred and ten; and from the 12th to the 21st of May (at which time the army moved from Spottsylvania), they were ten thousand three hundred and eighty-one—making an aggregate of thirty-nine thousand seven hundred and ninety-one.—Meade: Report of the Rapidan Campaign. But to this must be added the casualties of Burnside's corps, not then in the Army of the Potomac. Of these I have no returns.

† The dismounted men and those with worn and jaded animals were ordered to remain and guard the trains. These constituted nearly one-half of the corps.

on the 9th of May, with orders to engage the enemy's cavalry, and after destroying the Fredericksburg and Central railroads, to threaten Richmond and eventually communicate with and draw supplies from Butler's force on the James River.*

To mask the march the first move was towards Fredericksburg, near which, turning southward to the right, the column thrust itself inside the enemy's lines. The clouds of tell-tale dust, miles in length, soon informed Stuart, however, of its presence, and he dispatched a force in pursuit. But the rear being skilfully covered, the blows directed thereat did not retard Sheridan's progress. Reaching the crossing of the North Anna on the following day, he captured Beaver Dam Station on the Central Railroad, destroying ten miles of the track, two locomotives, three trains of cars, and a million and a half of rations. Here also he recaptured four hundred Union prisoners on their way to captivity in Richmond. At this point he was attacked by the enemy in flank and rear, but his loss was inconsiderable, and this affair did not serve to impede his progress. The South Anna was crossed at Ground-squirrel Bridge ; Ashland Station was captured at daylight of the 11th, and the depot, six miles of the road, a train, and a large quantity of stores were destroyed. After this, Sheridan resumed the march towards Richmond.

To meet this advance, Stuart had succeeded by a detour in interposing himself between the assailants and the Confederate capital, and had massed all his available cavalry at Yellen Tavern, a few miles north of Richmond. Here Sheridan immediately attacked him on the 11th, and after an obstinate contest gained possession of the turnpike, driving the Confederate force back towards Ashland and across the North Fork of the Chickahominy. In this passage at arms between the two ablest cavalry leaders of the rival armies, General J. E. B. Stuart, whose dashing exploits fill a brilliant page in the history of the war, was killed.

Pursuing his advantage gained at Yellow Tavern, Sheridan

* Meade: Report of the Rapidan Campaign.

made a bold dash upon the outer defences of Richmond. The first line, feebly defended, was carried—Custer's brigade capturing a section of artillery and a hundred prisoners. The second line, however, was too strong to be assailed, being thoroughly commanded by redoubts and bastioned works, and as the garrison rallied for the defence Sheridan retired towards the Chickahominy. Crossing at Meadow Bridge he drove the enemy from his front, and repulsed an attack on his rear by Confederate infantry from the city. After destroying the railroad-bridge over the Chickahominy, Sheridan moved to Haxall's Landing, which he reached on the 14th of May Here he remained three days to refit, when he returned by way of Baltimore Store, White House, and Hanover Court-house, rejoining the Army of the Potomac, the 25th of May, on the Pamunkey.

IV.

CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENTS ON THE JAMES AND IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY.

Thus far in the campaign, the course of this narrative has followed the main action as waged between the two mighty adversaries in tide-water Virginia. It is now necessary to interrupt for a time this recital, and trace the development of the movements co-operative under Butler and Sigel, on the banks of the James River and in the Valley of the Shenandoah. This I shall only do so far as may be necessary to set forth their relations with the general system of operations.

The force under General Butler was assembled at Yorktown and at Gloucester Point, on the opposite side of the York River, during the month of April. It was composed of the Eighteenth Corps, under General W F. Smith, and the Tenth

Corps,* which General Q. A. Gillmore had lately brought from the coast of South Carolina. General Butler had in addition a division of horse, under General Kautz; this division was, at this time, at Norfolk and Portsmouth. The strength of the army was somewhat above thirty thousand of all arms.

At Yorktown, Butler was in position to move by land up the Peninsula in the direction of Richmond; to use the line of the York River for an advance similar to that of McClellan, in 1862, or to take up the line of the James and threaten the Confederate capital from the south side. The last was the move actually intended, but the real destination of this column was kept secret; and feints of striking in both the other directions were made. The 1st of May, Butler dispatched a detachment of his force (Henry's brigade of Turner's division) by water to West Point, at the head of the York, and at the same time he sent a force of eighteen hundred cavalry to move, by way of West Point, across the Peninsula, attract the attention of the enemy towards Richmond, and then make a junction with his main body when it should have reached its destination. Kautz, with his mounted division, was instructed to move northward from Suffolk to the south side.

During the night of May 4th, the same day the Army of the Potomac crossed the Rapidan, the entire command of Butler embarked on transports, dropped down the York, passed Fortress Monroe, and, entering the James, ascended that river, convoyed by a fleet of gunboats. The following afternoon a landing was effected on the south side of the James—one detachment at City Point, another at Fort Powhatan, a few miles below; but the main body a mile or two above City Point, at Bermuda Hundred, a neck of land formed by the sinuous course of the James and Appomattox. The point of debarkation was between Petersburg and Richmond —ten miles north of the former and twenty miles south of

* The Tenth Corps was composed of three divisions under Brigadier-Generals Terry, Ames, and Turner; the Eighteenth Corps, of two divisions of white troops, under Brigadier-Generals Brooks and Weitzel, and a division of colored troops, under Brigadier-General Hinks.

the latter place. The landing was a complete surprise, and was made without molestation. Indeed, the Confederate force about Petersburg and Richmond was at this time very trivial.

General Butler's instructions from General Grant prescribed Richmond as his objective point; but his operations were to be contingent upon the results achieved by the Army of the Potomac. The programme drawn up by the lieutenant-general for Butler's governance is indeed vague, and in some respects contradictory, and it is difficult to tell precisely what was expected of that officer. He was commanded first of all to intrench at City Point, which would indicate rather a defensive than an offensive purpose. Further instructions ordered him to move against Richmond by the south bank of the James, capturing it if possible, and if not, investing it on the south side so as to have his left resting on the James above Richmond. It is, however, clearly set forth in papers not embodied by General Grant in his official report, that Butler's action was to hinge on General Grant's own success; that he expected, after decisive action, either to defeat Lee or drive him into the intrenchments at Richmond; that he would then approach the Confederate capital from the direction of the north and west, and, swinging across the James, make a junction with Butler, whose signal for action was to be Grant's guns thundering on the north side. But, as Grant's guns were never heard thundering on the north side, it is a matter of less surprise that Butler also was foiled in his part. Moreover, I shall attempt to show that there was, in any event, very little likelihood that the James River column would meet what seem to have been General Grant's expectations.

An advance against Richmond by the south bank of the James placed that great river between the city and the assailants, and the defence of the points of passage could readily be maintained by the local garrison until strengthened to withstand attack. It is, however, unnecessary to discuss this problem in detail, as it is hardly possible that General Grant ever

really expected General Butler to *capture* Richmond. Equally remote was the possibility of investing it from the south bank of the James, where the ground is a low, open plain. But there is another circumstance that greatly complicates any operation on that line, whether directed against Richmond immediately, or with a view to invest it from the south side, or with the object of holding a *débouché* for the Army of the Potomac above that city. This is the dangerous exposure of its rear and communications which the operating column must make. It is hardly to be supposed that, in framing a plan of operations for the James River column, there could be failure to note the certainty of the approach of adverse masses from the south; for the withdrawal of Gillmore's force from South Carolina left Beauregard free to hurry forward with a considerable army to Richmond, the danger to which was apparent the moment Butler landed on the south side of the James River. It is marvellous how it could have been expected that in this event Butler's army could have maintained a position above Richmond when not only its rear must have been so greatly exposed, but its line of communications, with its depot at Bermuda Hundred, must have been quite uncovered to the enemy.

In the actual situation the only effective service that Butler's force could render towards the execution of the general plan was to secure a lodgment on the south side of the James River, below Richmond, in case the Army of the Potomac should need to be transferred thither. This purpose might best of all have been attained by another operation, which, while serving this end, would have had the most important bearings on the general object of the campaign. This is to have immediately seized Petersburg, which, as the strategic key to Richmond, would probably have been decisive of the fall of that city. Had Petersburg been taken at this time, it is probable that Lee, abandoning as vain the attempt to defend the Confederate capital, would have fallen off on the Lynchburg or Danville line. But even had Lee attempted, by throwing himself upon Butler, to recover Petersburg, the

James River column was sufficiently powerful to have maintained alone the defence of the line of the Appomattox against any force the Confederates could spare to bring against it. It will now be seen how speedy was the punishment that befell dispositions originally faulty.

The debarkation of the force was completed by the 6th. As the instructions of General Grant were first of all to intrench, the construction of a defensive front across the narrow neck of Bermuda Hundred was immediately begun. This line was drawn within three miles of the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad, the destruction of which engaged Butler's first attention. The same day a brigade moved out to this road, which it struck near Walthal Junction. A small force of the enemy was encountered, and after a brisk skirmish the brigade returned.

Thus far there had been no indication of any considerable body of the enemy in the vicinity, but that night the van of Beauregard's army, drawn from Charleston, Savannah, and Florida, reached Petersburg. When, therefore, on the morning of the 7th, a column of five brigades moved out to destroy the Petersburg and Richmond Railroad, the enemy was found in a position covering that road, from Walthal Junction north to Chester station. Brooks attacked and drove this force from its vantage ground; but rallying, it pushed back his right, and finally both parties withdrew.

On the morning of the 9th, another advance was made to the railroad. Here a force was left facing in the direction of Richmond, while the remainder turned southward, towards Petersburg. The enemy was soon met and driven, skirmishing, to Swift Creek (three miles from Petersburg), on the right bank of which he occupied a strong line of earthworks. Having meanwhile effectually destroyed the railroad, Butler designed next day crossing Swift Creek and crowding the enemy into Petersburg; but that night he received from Washington such accounts of Lee's being "in full retreat to Richmond," that he resolved to turn northward, in order to aid in the investment of the Confederate capital.

Two days afterwards a general advance was made in the direction of Richmond. Whatever force of the enemy was encountered was pressed back until dark, when the Confederates took position on the left bank of Proctor's Creek. Next morning (13th) the enemy withdrew from the creek to an intrenched line in the rear. This line, if adequately held, would have been difficult to carry by assault; but General Gillmore succeeded in turning it, and held its extreme right. The possession of this line, however, only revealed the enemy holding an interior line of works, with a bastion salient on an eminence completely commanding the position gained. The flanks fell back on the Confederates' left to the James River and Drury's Bluff, and on their right extended in a northwesterly direction beyond any point visible. The prong or arm of the works which General Gillmore had turned ran into this second line at the bastion salient before mentioned. Butler's force was much strung out, and an assault ordered for the next morning had to be abandoned for the want of available troops to form a column. It was then determined to attack on the morning of the 16th.

The night of the 15th every thing was still. A thin film of clouds slightly obscured the sky, but it was not so heavy as to interfere seriously with the moonlight, and the heavens gave no token of what was presently to be seen. Before dawn a dense fog, arising from the margin of the James, overspread the whole face of the country with so opaque a pall that a horseman was not visible at a distance of ten yards. In the thick of this, and before dawn, the sleeping camp was suddenly aroused by a savage outburst of musketry and artillery fire along the whole line. Beauregard had taken advantage of the fog, and had begun the execution of a plan of offensive action which, under the circumstances, threatened fatal results to the Union force. Butler's force was disposed along a front excessively extended, and though General Smith endeavored to reach as far as possible by drawing out his corps in one thin line, there was still a full mile and a half of open, undulating country between his right flank and the

James. This great stretch was observed by nothing more than one hundred and fifty colored cavalry. Beauregard's dispositions to attack were well suited to the circumstances, and contemplated a simultaneous onset in front with a thrusting forward of the flanking column, to gain the rear of the Union line by the unguarded interval on its right flank. To make his stroke still more sure, the Confederate commander, while moving up with his main force from Petersburg to Butler's front, had left one of his divisions, under General Whiting, in position at a point on the Petersburg and Richmond Railroad, a considerable distance to the rear of the left of Butler's force. To this division was assigned the duty of moving directly forward simultaneously with the attack in front, and laying hold of the Union line of retreat. Nothing could be more complete than the plan, but its execution was very far from filling the measure of Beauregard's expectations.

The right of Smith's line, where the shock of the turning column was first felt, was held by Heckman's brigade. This was quite overwhelmed by the suddenness of the blow, and as the enemy was then entirely in rear of the right flank, a great disaster seemed imminent. It happened fortunately, however, that the night before General Butler had assigned three regiments of Ames' division of Gillmore's corps to General Smith as a reserve to his line. One of these regiments, the One Hundred and Twelfth New York, happily arrived at this critical juncture, and, being joined by the Ninth Maine Regiment, the two met the Confederates at a point where the transverse road on which they were moving forward crosses the road running back to Bermuda Hundred. This latter road the enemy were aiming to seize, when the purpose was foiled by the stubborn resistance of the two regiments above named. It is probable that the resistance here encountered gave the Confederate commander the impression that he had been mistaken in his notion of the Union dispositions, and caused him to believe that the Union right, instead of resting where it really did, was thrown back

en échelon. Thus disconcerted and confused in the thick fog, the Confederate turning column withdrew.

While this flanking operation was in execution, Beauregard assailed energetically the front of Smith's line, held by the divisions of Brooks and Weitzel. But so far from gaining any success here, he met a severe repulse. This was in a large measure due to a novel and ingenious device of General Smith, who had caused his men a day or two before to wind a large amount of telegraph wire (here found) around the stumps of trees, and thus cover their front. When, therefore, the Confederates ran forward to the assault, not perceiving the wire in the fog, they were tripped violently and shot as snared game by the Union marksmen.

Finding that the Union force was inexpugnable by a front attack, Beauregard set on foot a repetition of his turning move in heavier force against the right flank, this time made further to the right. The position was really untenable by the force at General Smith's disposal against a serious effort in that direction, for the Confederates had but to swing their left well round in order to attain a lateral road leading directly back to Bermuda Hundred. Accordingly, on learning this new turning movement—which threatened the trains, the communications, and even the depot on the James, which had been left but feebly defended—General Smith ordered a retirement of his line to a position in the rear, where he could better cover what was of value behind him.

While these things were passing on Smith's front, Gillmore's corps on the left had been less engaged. His right, indeed, felt the shock of the same attacks that were made upon Smith, but his left was entirely unassailed. This was due to the inexplicable inaction of General Whiting, whose position threatened directly the main line of retreat by the turnpike. Beauregard's instructions to him to attack were entirely disobeyed, and he made no motion whatever. In this condition of affairs it would have been fortunate had Gillmore's left been swung forward, for this movement would not only have relieved the pressure on Smith,

but would have taken Beauregard's line in reverse. When Smith's corps was withdrawn, General Gillmore conformed to the movement. The whole force was then by General Butler withdrawn within the lines at Bermuda Hundred. The Confederate loss in this action was about three thousand, and the Union loss nearly four thousand. Beauregard followed up leisurely, and threw up a defensive line confronting Butler's intrenchments.

It was certainly very unfortunate that Butler allowed himself to be thrown back into the *cul-de-sac* of Bermuda Hundred, where, if he was secure against attack, he was also powerless for offensive operations against Richmond—being, as he himself said at the time, bottled up and hermetically sealed. It was still open to him, however, to pass to the south bank of the Appomattox and seize Petersburg—the most important stroke he could possibly have executed. This soon became apparent to Butler, and he had made all his preparations to move on that place, when he was ordered by General Grant to detach the major part of his force to the assistance of the Army of the Potomac, which was then approaching the Chickahominy.

The expeditionary force in the Shenandoah Valley and West Virginia was divided into two columns—one under Crook, consisting of a force of infantry and a division of cavalry under General Averill, to move by the Kanawha to operate against the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad; the other, under Sigel, to advance as far as possible up the Virginia Valley. Both movements began the 1st of May.

Sigel moved up the Shenandoah Valley, met the enemy at Newmarket on the 15th, and, after a severe engagement, was defeated, with considerable loss, and retired behind Cedar Creek. Sigel was then superseded by General Hunter, who immediately took up the offensive under instructions from General Grant to move on Staunton and destroy the railroad thence towards Charlotteville. If he could reach the latter place, and thence move on Lynchburg, he was to do so.

Hunter encountered the Confederates the 5th of June, at Piedmont, and, after an action of several hours, defeated them, capturing fifteen hundred prisoners and three pieces of artillery. This result is attributable to the fact that Lee had ventured on detaching Breckinridge's division from the force in the valley to join the army confronting Grant. The 8th of the same month, Hunter formed a junction with Crook and Averill at Staunton, from which place he moved towards Lynchburg, by way of Lexington. Arriving before Lynchburg, it was found to be well defended; and, as Hunter learned that re-enforcements to the Confederates were arriving by railroad from Lee's army, while his own supplies of ammunition were nearly exhausted, he determined to return. But this he judged too perilous by the route over which he had advanced, seeing that the enemy, by means of the Virginia Central Railroad, might rapidly throw forces in his rear. He thought it better, therefore, to retire by the line of the Kanawha. His supplies had nearly given out; but it was confidently expected that great store would be found at Meadow Bridge, five or six marches from Lynchburg, where a half-million rations had been left a few days before by Crook and Averill, under guard of two Ohio regiments of hundred days' men. These troops, however, were stampeded by a contemptible handful of guerrillas, and, after burning about half the stores, carried off the remainder. The return of Hunter's column by way of the Alpine and almost impracticable region of West Virginia was attended with great privations; but he succeeded in bringing it through. The eccentric line of retreat taken up put him for several weeks out of all relation with military operations, and entirely uncovered the frontier of the loyal States. Aside from great material damage inflicted on the enemy by the destruction of foundries, factories, and mills, Hunter's operations had no sensible influence on the campaign in Virginia.

Both co-operative columns being thus disposed of, it is now time to return to the Army of the Potomac.

V.

FROM SPOTTSYLVANIA TO THE CHICKAHOMINY.

The experience of the twelve days before Spottsylvania brought the conviction to every man in the army that the position, as defended, was, in truth, impregnable. Of this even General Grant, anxious as he was to give Lee a crushing blow, was at length convinced. Then, as in the Wilderness, he began a movement to turn the position by a flank march. This is an operation usually accounted very hazardous in the presence of a vigilant enemy. Nevertheless, it was conducted with great precision and skill and complete success. First of all, Hancock's corps, taken from the right of the army, moved on the night of the 20th May, behind the cover of the remaining corps, eastward to Massaponax Church. Thence, heading southward, and preceded by Torbett's cavalry division, Hancock, on the following day, pushed his advance to Milford Station, on the Fredericksburg and Richmond Railroad, seventeen miles south of his point of starting. The cavalry in advance, with much address, dislodged a hostile force holding the bridge across the Mattapony near this point,* and Hancock threw his left over that stream at Bowling Green. In this position it bivouacked on the night of the 21st, and here also the Second Corps remained till the morning of the 23d, while other movements about to be described were under way.

This turning movement, jealously guarded as it was, did not pass unobserved by the wary enemy. Now, it is well

* It happened that a Confederate brigade, under Kemper, on its way from Richmond to Spottsylvania to re-enforce Lee, had reached this point and taken up a position on the right bank of the Mattapony—a position exceedingly strong against an attempt to cross that stream in force. The cavalry showed much skill and pluck in dislodging the enemy from this position, and captured sixty-six prisoners. But more important still, it secured the bridge.

known that a flank march in presence of the hostile army affords unusual opportunity of striking a blow, and a vigorous commander will not willingly let slip such an occasion of taking the offensive, either by falling upon that portion already on the march, or by attacking the portion that remains behind. It can hardly be supposed that it was any thing but Lee's weakness that prevented his adopting this course; for, although made aware of Grant's initiative, he, instead of acting on the aggressive, adopted the course of falling back on parallel roads nearer to Richmond, with the intention, however, of again interposing his army across Grant's line of march. Accordingly, at midnight on the 20th, the same night on which Hancock set out, Longstreet's corps was headed southward, and another grand race between the two armies, similar to that from the Wilderness to Spottsylvania, was begun. But as Lee's front at Spottsylvania gave him command of the best and direct route leading southward (namely, the telegraph road, with the roads converging on and radiating therefrom), and as it was necessary for the Army of the Potomac, on its delicate flank march, to take circuitous routes well eastward, it was, from the start, probable that Lee would gain on his adversary.

Hancock had begun the movement on the night of the 20th. On the morning of the 21st Warren's corps followed. Lee met this by sending Ewell's corps after Longstreet's. There then remained within the lines of Spottsylvania, Burnside's and Wright's corps on the Union side, and Hill's corps on the Confederate side. Burnside left that afternoon. Wright, with the Sixth Corps, prepared to follow. Hill then fancying it to be a good opportunity to assume the offensive, made a sally on Wright's front, and opened an attack, which, however, was easily repulsed.* During the night the Sixth Corps with-

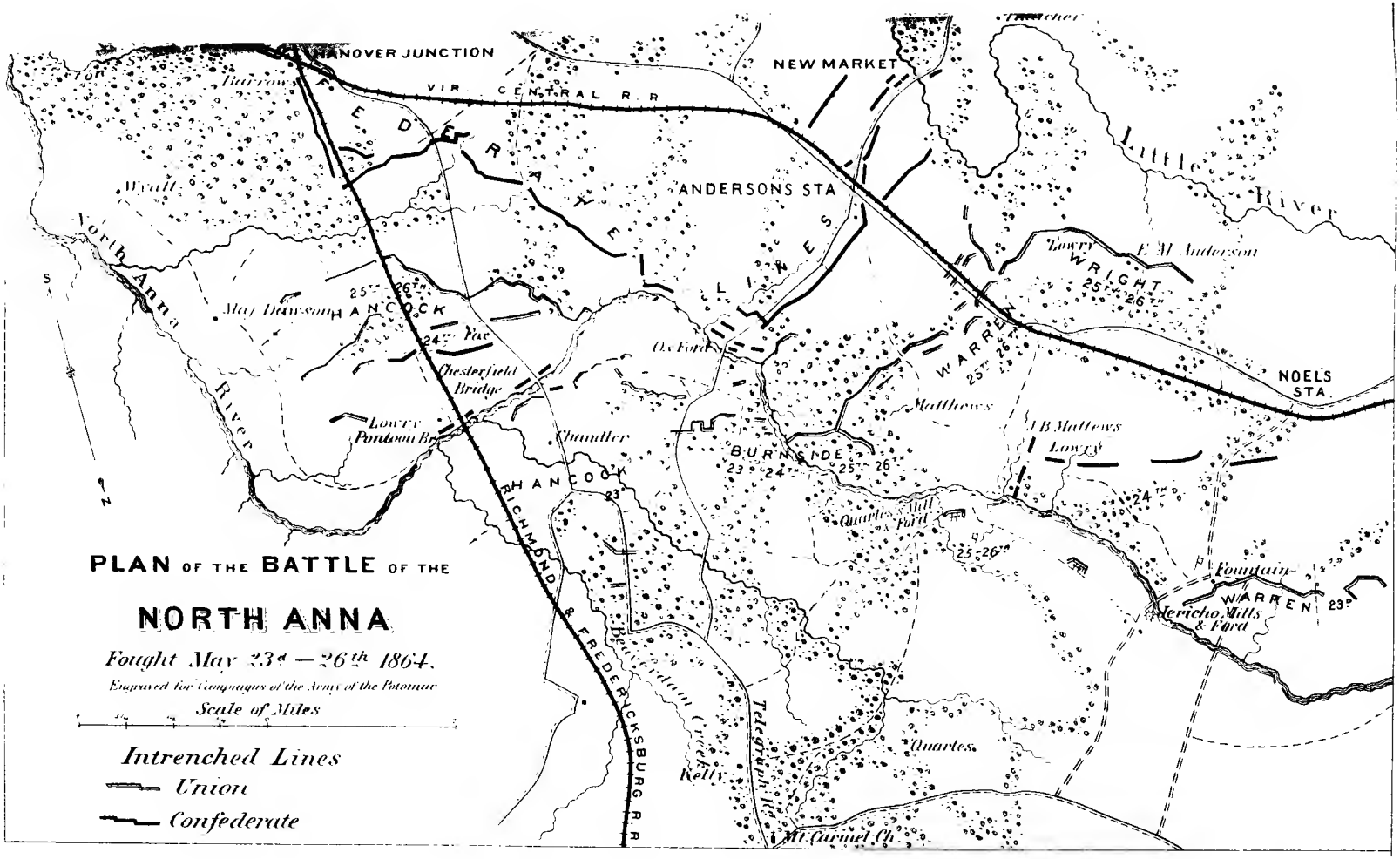
* Hill committed an error in making the attack in front; for had he crossed the Ny above, he would have struck the right flank of the Sixth Corps, uncovered by the withdrawal of Warren, and would have had a very effective enfilading fire. As it was, he succeeded in breaking Wright's line at one place; but a heavy artillery fire checked his advance.

drew; Hill did the same, and the works of Spottsylvania, ceasing to be the objects either of attack or defence, remained as parts of the series of parallels that along the whole route of the contending armies, from the Rapidan to the James, stand monuments of the most desperate campaign in history.

The two armies once fairly on the march, their operations belong to the domain of strategy, which deals with the movements of armies out of sight of each other. Neither indeed, seems to have sought to deal the other a blow while on the march, and both headed, as for a common goal, towards the North Anna. Two marches brought the rival forces onee more close to each other.

The region between Spottsylvania and the North Anna, through which the advance conducted, is fair and fertile—the face of the country, beautifully undulating, is nowhere bold, and the river-bottoms have many large and fine plantations, which were at this time under cultivation. It was indeed virgin ground over which the army advanced, showing none of those desolating traces of war that marked all Virginia north of the Rapidan. Here were fields with sprouting wheat and growing corn and luxuriant clover; lowing herds and the perfume of blossoms, and the song of summer birds; homesteads of the Virginia planter (every thing on a large and generous scale), and great ancestral elms, dating back to the time before our forefathers learned to be rebels. Coming as the army so lately did from where the tread of hostile feet for three years had made the country bare and barren as a threshing-floor, the region through which it now passed seemed a very Araby the Blest.

The advances of the 21st and 22d brought the different corps, which had moved on parallel roads at supporting distance, within a few miles of the North Anna River. Resuming the march on the morning of Monday, May 23d, the army in a few hours reached the northern bank of that stream. But it was only to descry its old enemy planted on


HANOVER JUNCTION
NEW MARKET
VIR. CENTRAL R.R.
FEDERATE LINES
ANDERSONS STA
Little River
North Anna River
HANCOCK
WRIGHT
WARREN
BURNSIDE
Chesterfield Bridge
Lowry Pontoon Br.
Ox Ford
Chandler
Matthews
J.B. Matthews
Lowry
Quarles Mill Ford
Fountain
Jericho Mills & Ford
NOELS STA.
RICHMOND & FREDERICKSBURG R.R.
Telegraph Rd
Quarles
Kelly
Mt. Carmel Ch
PLAN OF THE BATTLE OF THE
NORTH ANNA
Fought May 23d — 26th 1864.
Engraved for Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac
Scale of Miles
Intrenched Lines
Union
Confederate

the opposite side!* The problem then passed from the domain of strategy into the tactical question of forcing the passage of the river—an operation always delicate and difficult when vigorously resisted. And that it would be vigorously resisted there was every promise; for if Lee purposed making a stand between the North and South Anna, he would naturally seek to gain all the time possible in order to establish himself well in his new position. Moreover, the North Anna covers the Virginia Central Railroad (here but from one to three miles south of the river), by which re-enforcements were coming to him from the Valley of the Shenandoah.

The lines on which the army had pushed its advance brought the columns to the North Anna, near the point at which the Fredericksburg and Richmond Railroad crosses that stream. The left column under Hancock, indeed, struck it at the railroad, and at a point one mile above where the telegraph road from Fredericksburg to Richmond crosses the North Anna on a wooden bridge: the right column, under Warren, four miles higher up, at Jericho Ford. By a contrary fortune, Warren was able to effect the passage without any resistance, but was savagely assailed on the other side; while Hancock had to fight on the north bank for a crossing.

When Warren's column reached the North Anna at Jericho Ford, the Confederate commander, absorbed in guarding the points of passage opposite his right, either unwittingly neglected, or did not heed the crossing above; so that on Warren's arrival at Jericho Ford, no enemy was observed on the southern bank—a circumstance of which advantage was at once taken. The river has here very precipitous banks and a rocky bed; and Jericho Ford is a ford in name rather than in reality. Nevertheless, the head of Warren's column, the brigade of Bartlett, accoutred as it was, plunged into the stream breast deep, waded across, and, forming line of battle on the opposite side, covered the building of a ponton-bridge.

* "The enemy was seen in large force marching in column on the opposite bank, evidently *en route* from Spottsylvania."—Hancock's Report.

This being quickly done, the whole of the corps crossed early in the afternoon. Line of battle was formed with Cutler's division on the right, Griffin's division in the centre, and Crawford's division on the left. Then pushing out several hundred yards, the corps took position on the hither side of a piece of woods that lies between the river and the Virginia Central Railroad, distant a mile and a half. Nothing more than a heavy skirmish line was at first met, the only Confederate force at the moment present being a single brigade of Wilcox's divison of Hill's corps, under command of Colonel Brown. But this was soon re-enforced by the three other brigades of the division,* and by Heth's division. Warren's line was just about to begin intrenching itself in the position taken up, when, a little past five o'clock, Griffin, holding the centre, was furiously assailed by the force above mentioned, which suddenly developed double lines of battle. Griffin effectually repulsed the attack, and with such loss to the assailants, that the Confederate commander, while continuing to hold three brigades on Griffin's front, detached the brigade under Brown to make an assault in flank.† Marching in column up the railroad for some distance, that brigade wheeled by right into line of battle, and fell upon Cutler's division, which was just getting into position on the right of Griffin. Cutler's left giving way, the whole division was thrown into much confusion. This uncovered Griffin's right; but the danger was avoided by refusing that flank somewhat, and at the same time Bartlett's brigade hurried forward and re-established the line. In the execution of this manœuvre, there occurred one of those odd rencounters which occasionally happen in the complicated action of battle. One of Bartlett's regiments (the Eighty-third Pennsylvania, under Lieutenant-Colonel McCoy), in marching up by the flank, ran plump against Brown's column, which was moving to follow

* The brigades of Scales, Gordon, and Thomas.

† The manner of execution of this movement I had on the spot from Colonel Brown himself, who, as will be seen, was in a few minutes taken prisoner.

up its first advantage against the right. It was one of those critical situations which a moment will decide—the decision, in fact, depending on gaining the advantage of the first volley. With quick self-possession, McCoy wheeled his forward companies into line, and secured the first fire. One of McCoy's men seized the Confederate commander by the collar and dragged him in, and the Eighty-third poured into the flank and rear of the hostile brigade a volley which sent it back in disorder through the woods. The repulse of the enemy at all points on Warren's front was now complete, and nearly a thousand prisoners were taken. Warren's entire loss was not above three hundred and fifty in killed and wounded.

I pass now from Warren on the right to Hancock on the left, where that officer had to carry the passage of the river against considerable opposition. Hancock's point of passage, as already seen, was the Chesterfield or County Bridge, a mile above the railroad crossing of the North Anna. Here the Confederates had constructed a *tête-de-pont* on a tongue of land formed by Long Creek and the North Anna. Covering the bridge on the north side was an extended redan, with a wet ditch in front, the gorge being commanded by rifle-trenches in the rear. On the southern bank, which dominates the northern, was a similar work.* The tongue of land to be overpassed in carrying the bridge-head was a bare and barren plain several hundred yards in width, ascending sharply towards the enemy's position, which, as it turned out, was held by a part of McLaws' division of Longstreet's corps. Birney's division of Hancock's corps was assigned the duty of carrying the work and bridge. To cover the storming party, Colonel Tidball, chief of artillery of the corps, placed in position three sections, which replied with effect to the enemy's fire. An hour before sundown, the assault was made by the brigades of Pierce and Egan, that, under a

* These works were built the year previous, about the time of the battle of Chancellorsville.

heavy fire, swept across the open plain at double-quick. As the menacing line approached close to the work, the garrison fled precipitately, and the men, making a foothold in the parapet with their bayonets, clambered over it and planted their colors on the redan. Thirty men of the defending force, unable to escape, were captured in the ditch. The affair was exceedingly spirited, and cost less than a hundred and fifty men. The enemy made several attempts to burn the bridge during the night, but these were frustrated by the vigilance and good conduct of the troops.

On the following morning it was found that the Confederates had abandoned their advanced works on the southern bank of the river. Hancock's corps then crossed by the bridge. At the same time the Sixth Corps made the passage on the right at the same point at which Warren's corps had defiled the previous evening.

It will have been noted that the point at which the left column under Hancock crossed the North Anna, is separated from the point at which the right column under Warren had made the passage by an interval of four miles. From this circumstance there resulted a very peculiar formation of the Confederate line; and from this a train of events that baulked the attempt to push the advance across the South Anna, and finally compelled General Grant to abandon the attempt, recross the North Anna, and take up a wholly different line of march. I shall endeavor to make this intelligible.

While Lee, after the passage of Hancock on the left, threw his right wing back from the North Anna, and on the passage of Warren on the right threw back his left wing, he continued to cling with his centre to the river; so that, as I have said, his army took up a very remarkable line in the form of an obtuse-angled triangle, with the vertex thrust out on the North Anna, his right flank refused on the Hanover marshes, and his left flank thrown back and resting on Little River. Hancock's corps was abreast one face of this triangle; Warren's and Wright's corps were abreast the other face. Now, when Burnside attempted to throw his command across the

North Anna at a transit intermediate between the points of passage of Hancock and Warren, his advance division, under General Crittenden, suffered very severely in the operation. Moreover, when Warren attempted to extend his line by sending down Crawford's division from the right to connect with Crittenden, this force also was assailed, and with considerable difficulty made its way back. Then the Confederates interposing, cut off connection between Hancock's and Warren's corps, and therefore between the two wings of the army.

The game of war seldom presents a more effectual checkmate than was here given by Lee; for after Grant had made the brilliantly successful passage of the North Anna, the Confederate commander, thrusting his centre between the two wings of the Army of the Potomac, put his antagonist at enormous disadvantage, and compelled him, for the reenforcement of one or the other wing, to make a double passage of the river. The more the position of Lee was examined, the more unpromising attack was seen to be; and after passing the two following days in reconnoissances, and in destroying some miles of the Virginia Central Railroad, General Grant determined to withdraw across the North Anna and take up a new line of advance.*

The withdrawal from the North Anna was begun at dark of the 26th of May, when the Second, Fifth, and Sixth corps retired by different bridges to the north bank. It was designed to make the movement secretly, and this purpose was successfully accomplished. Not a picket shot was fired, and no sound broke on the midnight air save the low rumble of the artillery and wagons, and the tread of armed men as they moved across the bridges. It was near daylight before the rear of the long columns had filed across. The army then headed eastward and southward to cross the Pamunkey.

* General Grant's statement of the situation is vague, and is in the following words: "Finding the enemy's position on the North Anna stronger than either of his previous ones, I withdrew on the night of the 26th to the north bank of the North Anna." Report, p. 9.

The Sixth Corps led the van, followed by the Fifth and Ninth corps. The Second Corps held position till the morning of the 27th, when it covered the rear.

From the North Anna the line of march of the army made a wide circuit eastward and then southward to pass the Pamunkey. This river is formed by the confluence of the North and South Anna; and the Pamunkey in turn uniting with the Mattapony, forms the York River, emptying into Chesapeake Bay. Thus the successful passage of the Pamunkey would not only dislodge Lee from the lines of the North and South Anna, but would bring the army in communication with a new and excellent water-base. While the army was at Spottsylvania Courthouse it had used Fredericksburg as a depot; when it moved to the North Anna, the base was shifted to Port Royal on the Rappahannock. Cutting loose from this, it had White House as a depot.

The Sixth Corps, preceded by two divisions of cavalry under Sheridan, had the advance on the night of the 26th; and on the morning of the 27th, after a beautifully executed march of twenty-two miles, the head of the column struck the Pamunkey at Hanovertown. Nothing was present but a small mounted force in observation: this was readily dispersed or captured. The Sixth Corps thereupon made the passage, uncovered the fords, and took position to await the arrival of the remaining corps of the army. These continued their march during the day, and on the morning of the 28th the Fifth and Ninth corps had joined the van on the south side of the Pamunkey. The Second Corps bringing up the rear, retired from the North Anna on the morning of the 27th, and on the same afternoon made the passage at a ford four miles above Hanovertown. The whole army was thus across the Pamunkey; and the routes to White House, at the head of York River, being opened up, the army was put in communication with the ample supplies floated by the waters of Chesapeake Bay.

Grant's new turning movement was met by a corresponding retrograde movement on the part of Lee, and as he fell back

on a direct line less than half the distance of the great detour made by the Army of the Potomac, it was not remarkable that, on crossing the Pamunkey, the Confederate force was again encountered, ready to accept the gage of battle. Lee assumed a position in advance of the Chickahominy, covering the Virginia Central and Fredericksburg and Richmond railroads. His line of battle, as thus formed, faced northeastward. This front of opposition compelled dispositions to dislodge the Confederate force before essaying the passage of the Chickahominy. The cavalry was immediately pushed out on the Hanover road, and at a point known as Hawes' Shop, the brigades of Davies, Gregg, and Custer became warmly engaged, on the afternoon of the 28th, with the Confederate cavalry under Fitz Hugh Lee and Hampton. The troopers, as usual, dismounted, and for several hours fought with great obstinacy, and unusually large loss—Sheridan losing upwards of four hundred, and the Confederates nearly double that number. The combat ended, however, in Sheridan's retaining possession of this important junction of roads, which enabled the entire line of the army to be thrown forward in advance of Hawes' Shop. The Confederates retired behind the Tolopotomy.

The region in which the army was now operating revived many reminiscences in the minds of those who had made the Peninsular Campaign under McClellan; for it was at Hawes' Shop that the extreme right of the army then rested, and here that Stuart, in moving from Hanover Courthouse to make his famous raid, first struck McClellan's outposts. Gaines' Mill and Mechanicsville were within an hour's ride; Fair Oaks could be reached in a two hours' trot; Richmond was ten miles off, and to those within that city the morning air daily wafted the booming of hostile guns.

Meantime, where Lee had taken up his real vantage ground was uncertain, and, with the view of developing his position, strong reconnoissances by all the corps were next day thrown forward: the Sixth Corps was directed on Hanover Courthouse; the Second Corps on the road from Hawes' Shop towards

the same point; the Fifth Corps towards Shady Grove Church, and the Ninth Corps to be in position to support either the Second or Fifth.* Wright, with the Sixth Corps, passed around the Confederate left, and succeeded in reaching Hanover Courthouse; but it was not long before Hancock and Warren were brought to a halt. Hancock, advancing towards Hanover Courthouse, was suddenly arrested at Tolopotomy Creek, an affluent of the Pamunkey, on the south bank of which the enemy was found strongly intrenched. The stubborn resistance encountered compelled Hancock to bring up the rest of his corps, and next day the Ninth Corps was formed on his left; and the Sixth closing in to the left, was placed on his right, with the design of forcing the position. Heavy skirmishing took place; but, though Hancock succeeded in carrying an advanced line, the main position, strongly intrenched and covered by marshy ground, was found to be entirely too formidable to assail.† Warren, on the left, experienced a like check in his advance towards Shady Grove Church, on the road to which, and at the point where the main branch of the Tolopotomy crosses that road, the enemy was found in line of battle. It was ascertained that the whole of Ewell's corps held position at Shady Grove Church, and as the enemy soon afterwards appeared to be threatening to move round by the Mechanicsville pike and turn Warren's left, Crawford directed one of his brigades to the left to cover that road. This brigade of the Reserves, under Colonel Hardin, had hardly reached the vicinity of Bethesda Church, on the Mechanicsville pike, when Rodes' division of Ewell's corps, moving by that road, assailed it furiously on the flank. After maintaining the unequal contest for a few minutes, the brigade fell back to the Shady Grove road with the enemy in pursuit. Here, however, the Confederates were held in check by the excellent practice of a battery, and at this moment General Crawford brought up the

* General Meade: Order, May 29th.

† Hancock's Report.

remainder of the Reserves. With these, and the brigade of Colonel Kitching, Crawford took up a good position, and gave an effectual repulse to a very impetuous assault by Rodes. The left was then extended so as to cover the Mechanicsville pike at dark.

These reconnoissances showed Lee to be in a very strong position covering the approaches to the Chickahominy, the forcing of which it was now clear must cost a great battle.

VI.

THE BATTLE OF COLD HARBOR.

The Chickahominy may be regarded as a wet ditch in front of the outer fortifications of Richmond. It was therefore absolutely necessary, for further advance upon the line taken up by General Grant, to force the passage of this stream. But it was clear from the development of the enemy's strength that the effort to carry a direct crossing where the two armies faced each other, had little promise of success. It was accordingly judged advisable to extend towards the left and endeavor to pass the Chickahominy below by a movement by Cold Harbor. This place, which, as the point of convergence of all the roads leading whether to Richmond or to White House (now the depot of supplies of the army), was to be considered as a strategic point of the first importance, had been secured after a brisk action by Sheridan's cavalry on the afternoon of the 31st. The same night the Sixth Corps was detached from the extreme right of the army and directed on Cold Harbor, towards which also a body of troops from Butler's command was then *en route*. On this point explanation may be necessary.

Finding that Butler, after his retirement within the *cul-de-sac* of Bermuda Hundred, could readily hold his narrow front with a fractional force, General Grant ordered him to form

all that could be spared into a movable column and forward it to make a junction with the Army of the Potomac. Accordingly, on the 29th of May, a force of sixteen thousand men, under General W F. Smith, made up of four divisions taken from the Tenth and Eighteenth corps, was embarked on transports in the James River, and after passing down the James, and ascending the York and Pamunkey, debarked at White House on the following day. Here General Smith received orders from the headquarters of General Grant to move his command to New Castle, on the south side of the Pamunkey.* It will be observed that a movement on that point must throw Smith completely out of position in relation to the Army of the Potomac, then fronting the Chickahominy —a fact that was sufficiently evident to that officer on his arrival there, on the night of the 31st, after a long and fatiguing march. It was not, however, till the following morning that he learned from an officer of General Grant's staff that his orders had been wrongly worded—that instead of New Castle it was New Cold Harbor he was designed to reach, and that in consequence he had made an unnecessary march of ten or fifteen miles. Upon this, General Smith countermarched his column, and on the afternoon of that day (June 1st) reached Cold Harbor, where the Sixth Corps, detached, as already seen, from the right of the Army of the Potomac, had just arrived. At Cold Harbor General Smith was met with orders from General Meade, to take position on the right of the Sixth Corps and co-operate with it in an immediate attack.†

Now, as soon as the Sixth Corps was withdrawn from the right of the army, Lee, detecting the procedure, and sus-

* General Smith's Report: Order from General Grant, dated Hanovertown May 28th.

† The precise terms of the order to General Smith were quite peculiar; for he was commanded to "hold the road from Cold Harbor to Bethesda Church" (Warren's position), *and* "co-operate with the Sixth Corps in an attack." As General Smith's force was insufficient even to fill this space of several miles he abandoned the attempt to comply with the first part of his instructions and resolved to execute the second—that is, attack.

pecting its object, met this manœuvre by withdrawing Longstreet's corps from his own left, and directing it towards Cold Harbor, to cover there any attempt to force the passage of the Chickahominy: so that when Wright and Smith arrived, it was no longer the slight force encountered by Sheridan that they were to meet. The enemy was descried in force holding position behind Cold Harbor in a thick wood, to reach which it was necessary to traverse an open field several hundred yards in width. Dispositions being completed towards four o'clock in the afternoon, the assault was made very spiritedly, the troops advancing over the open space under a very severe fire. Both the left of Smith's line and the right of the Sixth Corps succeeded in carrying the first line of rifle-trenches, capturing between them six hundred prisoners. It was, however, found quite impracticable to carry the second line, and the troops rested on their arms for the night, after dispositions to secure what had been gained. The casualties in this action were severe, being upwards of two thousand men in the two corps.

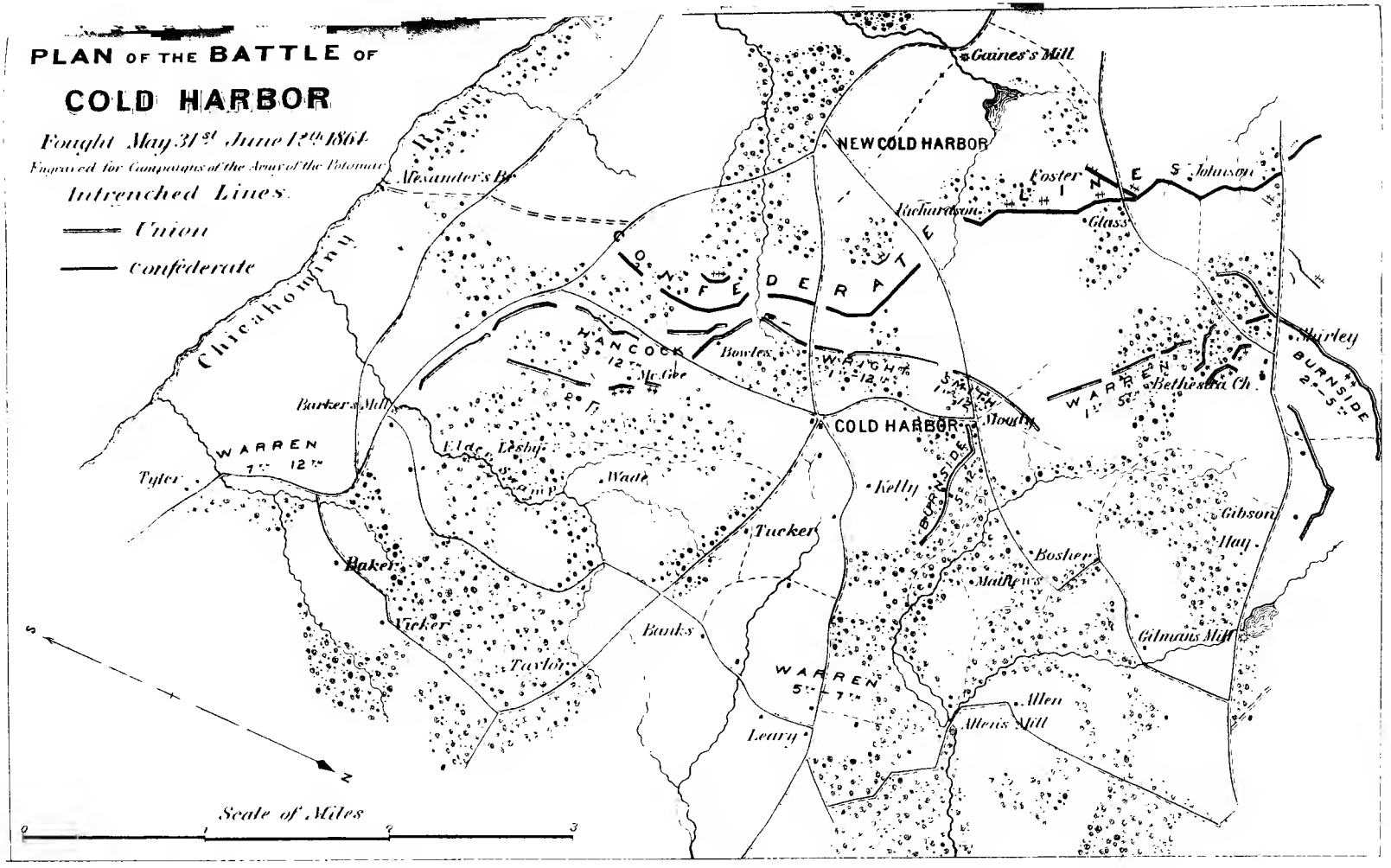
Great as was the loss in this action it secured the possession of Cold Harbor, which it was indispensable to hold; for General Grant had determined there to force the passage of the Chickahominy, and compel Lee to retire within the intrenchments of Richmond. Hancock's corps, which, since the withdrawal of the Sixth Corps from the line of the Tolopotomy, formed the right of the army, was ordered that night from its position, and directed on Cold Harbor, to take position on the left of the Sixth Corps. Warren's corps continued near Bethesda Church, and though holding a line excessively long (nearly four miles in extent), there was still an interval between his left and Smith's right. To close this gap, Warren was directed by General Meade to extend his left, while Burnside's command was to retire altogether from its place on the right of the line, and mass on the right and rear of Warren. When Burnside, during the afternoon of the 2d, was in the act of executing this movement, the enemy, detecting it, followed up with a line of battle, drove Burn-

side's skirmish line through a swamp, capturing many, and then penetrating between Warren's line of battle and his skirmish line, cut off and took prisoners about four hundred men. This sudden attack of course put an end to Warren's contemplated extension to the left, and compelled him to act on the defensive at once, to avert any positive disaster. The enemy's sally was, however, not made with much vigor, and was readily repulsed by Bartlett's brigade. Dispositions were then made by the Fifth and Ninth corps for the battle which was determined on for the morrow.

Cold Harbor, where Generals Grant and Meade established their headquarters for the impending passage at arms, is no *harbor*, as the name might imply, for it is quite inland;* nor is it even a centre of population, nor so much as a collection of farm-houses, but a mere *locality*, having all its importance from the convergence of roads there. Behind it runs the Chickahominy, and the map will reveal that we are here again on classic ground; for it was here that the battle of Gaines' Mill, the first of the series of actions in McClellan's retrograde movement across the Peninsula, was fought. As the lines were now drawn, however, there was this difference, that the relative situations of the combatants were quite reversed—Lee holding McClellan's position and Grant Lee's.

Lee disposed his force on the hither side of the Chickahominy, in an excellent position for defence, having the front of approach obstructed by thickets and cut up by marshes. The Union force was drawn up in the order already given—Hancock's corps on the left; then the Sixth Corps; then Smith's command; then Warren and Burnside on the right. The left rested across the Dispatch Station road, the right on Tolopotomy Creek. Sheridan with two divisions of horse

* Many interpretations of Cold or Coal Harbor have been given. It has been suggested that the proper form is "Cool Arbor"—a designation which its shady coverts might justify. But it would appear that "Cold Harbor" is a common name for many places along the travelled roads in England, and means simply, "shelter without fire."


PLAN OF THE BATTLE OF
COLD HARBOR
Fought May 31st June 12th 1864
Engraved for Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac
Intrenched Lines.
Union
Confederate
Chickahominy River
Alexander's Br
Gaines's Mill
NEW COLD HARBOR
Foster
Johnson
Richardson
Glass
LINES
CONFEDERATE
HANCOCK
3 12
Bowles
McGee
WRIGHT
1 12
SMITH
1 12
WARREN
1 5
Bethesda Ch
Shirley
BURNSIDE
2 5
Barker's Mill
COLD HARBOR
Moody
WARREN
7 12
Tyler
Elder Swamp
Lesby
Wade
Kelly
BURNSIDE
5 12
Gibson
Hay
Tucker
Bosher
Mathews
Baker
Vicker
Banks
Gilmans Mill
Taylor
WARREN
5 7
Allen
Allen's Mill
Leary
S
N
Scale of Miles
0
1
2
3

held the lower crossings of the Chickahominy and covered the roads to White House. The other cavalry division under Wilson took post on the right flank. The manner of attack ordered was of the kind already so often made in the course of this campaign—a general assault along the whole front of six miles, to be made at half-past four in the morning.

Next morning, with the first gray light of dawn struggling through the clouds, the preparations began: from behind the rude parapets there was an upstarting, a springing to arms, the muffled commands of officers forming the line. The attack was ordered at half-past four, and it may have been five minutes after that, or it may have been ten minutes, but it certainly was not later than forty-five minutes past four, when the whole line was in motion, and the dark hollows between the armies were lit up with the fires of death.

It took hardly more than ten minutes of the figment men call time to decide the battle. There was along the whole line a rush—the spectacle of impregnable works—a bloody loss —then a sullen falling back, and the action was *decided*. Conceive of this in the large, and we shall then be able to descend to some of the points of action as they individualize themselves along the line.

Hancock held the left of the whole army. His attack was made by the division of Barlow on the left and Gibbon on the right, with Birney supporting. Barlow, formed in two lines, advanced, and found the enemy strongly posted in a sunken road in front of his works. From this, after a severe struggle, the enemy was dislodged and followed into his works, where several hundred prisoners, a color, and three guns were taken. The guns were immediately turned upon the enemy, forcing him to retreat in confusion from that part of the line. But this partial success was speedily turned into a reverse; for not only did Barlow's second line fail to come up to the prompt support of the first,* but the enemy, speedily re-enforced, forced Barlow's troops out of the captured works.

* Hancock: Report of Cold Harbor.

They fell back, but not to their original position: to a position far in advance of that from which they had moved forward, and but from thirty to seventy-five yards from the enemy, where, taking advantage of the ground, they covered themselves in an astonishingly short time.

Gibbon's advance was simultaneous with Barlow's; but in moving forward, he came upon one of the swamps of the Chickahominy, which widened as the line neared the enemy's intrenchments. This separated his command; but the troops, at a fearful sacrifice, advanced close up to the works. Some for a moment entered them. Colonel McMahon, with a part of his regiment, separated by the swamp from the rest of his brigade, reached the parapet, planted on it his colors, but fell covered with many wounds, and expired in the enemy's hands, losing his colors with honor. The gallant Colonels Porter, Morris, McKeen, and Haskell were killed, and General Tyler was wounded. Yet Gibbon's troops, too, clung tenaciously to the ground gained; and some remained so close to the hostile works, that the men could only be reached by covered ways. In less than an hour Hancock's loss was above three thousand.

The story of the advance of the Sixth Corps on the right of Hancock, and that of Smith on the right of the Sixth, is of a like tenor. Every assault was immediately repulsed most disastrously; and to retain possession of an advanced position, more or less close to the enemy's line, was the utmost that could be done.

To the right the Fifth Corps was strung out in a line so thin and extended, that beyond holding its own, it was hopeless for that corps to attempt to do more. The Ninth Corps made no attack at the hour ordered; but General Burnside got two of his divisions round in position to assail the enemy's left flank, and by noon had one brigade posted across the eastern end of the Shady Grove road. This force warmly engaged the enemy. The batteries of the corps worked sufficiently far round to the right to make the Confederate position at that point very difficult to hold; and by afternoon

General Burnside was prepared to assail the enemy's left. Long before that time, however, the action had been suspended.

The action was decided, as I have said, in an incredibly brief time in the morning's assault. But, rapidly as the result was reached, it was *decisive;* for the consciousness of every man pronounced further assault hopeless. The troops went forward as far as the example of their officers could carry them :* nor was it possible to urge them beyond; for there they knew lay only death, without even the chance of victory. The completeness with which this judgment had been reached by the whole army was strikingly illustrated by an incident that occurred during the forenoon. Some hours after the failure of the first assault, General Meade sent instructions to each corps-commander to renew the attack without reference to the troops on his right or left. The order was issued through these officers to their subordinate commanders, and from them descended through the wonted channels; but no man stirred, and the immobile lines pronounced a verdict, silent, yet emphatic, against further slaughter. The loss on the Union side in this sanguinary action was over thirteen thousand, while on the part of the Confederates, it is doubtful whether it reached that many hundreds.

In criticism of the action of Cold Harbor it must be said, that it is difficult to see how battles can be won on the principle here adopted. If to be superior to your adversary at the actual point of contact be a cardinal maxim of war, it is not easy to discover on what ground success can be hoped from such general assaults along a line of many miles, and consequently everywhere weak, made by corps-commanders independently of each other, and directed against positions which have not been reconnoitred, over most unequal conditions of

* This phrase, "*as far as the example of their officers could carry them,*" I take from the Report of General Hancock. It is true of the whole army, and to those who witnessed that terrible slaughter, will have an almost pathetic significance.

terrain, and at a uniform and precise moment fixed for all by the watch. If this rude and primitive array sufficed, one might forget all that experience has taught and genius devised of the means by which success is snatched on the field of battle—one might forget that there are key-points on every field—that it is the aim of the commander to determine this point on his actual front, and then by massing heavily against it, by concentrating his force into a focus of fiery energy, instead of dissipating it in indefinite space, to seize such master-ground as may give the opening for a decisive blow.

The bloody experiment at Cold Harbor, far from disproving this principle of action, signally confirmed it; for while the assault along the whole line everywhere failed, there was at least one tactical point on the field which, had dispositions suited to the occasion been made, might have been seized, and a path to success opened. This point was a bald height opposite the Union left, named Watt's Hill, dominating the whole ground, and covering the angle of the dispatch road. Along this ridge, on which Lee's right rested, the Confederate line formed a salient, and in front of it was the sunken road from which Hancock's left division dislodged the enemy, and then, by an impetuous rush, carried, and for a moment held the works beyond. But so little consideration had been given in advance to the dispositions of attack, that it was not till after its blood-bought victory had been snatched from that slender force, that the supreme importance of this position was appreciated. By this time the position had been re-enforced by the enemy, and the opportune moment was of course lost; but had a heavy force at first been massed against that point, it might not only have been held, but the entire hostile line would then have been taken in reverse.

After the failure of the first assault, renewal of the attack was seen to be so void of all show of success, that at half-past one o'clock in the afternoon, offensive operations were formally suspended, and the corps-commanders were ordered to

intrench their advanced positions. Next day siege operations were begun, with a view to carry the defences of the Chickahominy by regular approaches. But this work also, at the end of a few days, ceased, and General Grant determined to change his line of operations to the south side of the James River. The circumstances under which this determination was made, and the manner in which it was carried into execution, will be detailed in the succeeding campaign.

VII.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE OVERLAND CAMPAIGN.

The course of this narrative has already set forth the series of operations, remarkable in the history of warfare, by which, in one pregnant month, the Army of the Potomac fought its way to the Chickahominy.

The campaign indeed resembled less ordinary campaigns than a kind of running siege. From the Rapidan to the Chickahominy the face of the country was covered with the intrenched lines, within which these "points of mighty opposites," the Armies of the Potomac and of Northern Virginia, had waged a succession of deadly conflicts. At every advance, Lee was able to meet his adversary with a front of opposition, and within his improvised strongholds exact a heavy price in blood. And although the illustrious valor of the Army of the Potomac more than once plucked victory from the jaws of hell, and bayoneted an unyielding enemy in the very *enceinte* of his citadel, the Union commander was never able to crush his opponent, who, thrown again and again in the mighty wrestle, each time rose quickly to his feet. Foiled in the effort to force a direct issue, General Grant, at the end of each combat, initiated a movement to turn the hostile front; and these flanking operations were executed with much address—throwing the Confederates suc-

cessively out of the positions at the Wilderness, before Spottsylvania, on the North Anna, and along the Pamunkey. Thus, by battles and marches, the army, in thirty days and thirty nights, reached the Chickahominy.

Now, it will be observed that each of these turning movements, up to the Chickahominy, brought the army nearer at each leap to the objective of all its efforts, Richmond. But, once before the Chickahominy, the series of flanking operations was exhausted; for any additional move by the left would throw the army not towards, but away from Richmond. If, therefore, it was designed to push the advance by the line on which the army was now acting, and on which General Grant had declared he would "fight it out, if it took all summer," * it was absolutely necessary to force the passage of the Chickahominy. The result of the battle of Cold Harbor, fought on the 3d of May, was to show that this line could not be carried by a *coup de main*.

But as the alternative was either to force a crossing of this stream or abandon that line of operations altogether, General Grant's first impulse after the disastrous upshot of the action at Cold Harbor, was to order the initiation of siege operations, with the view to carry the position by regular approaches. It was not long, however, before the unpromising aspect of the result that would follow even a successful issue on the Chickahominy gave pause to this purpose, and finally led to the adoption of an altogether new line of manœuvre.

In the discussion of the "overland route," with which the recital of this campaign opened, I have shown that any advance on that line ends in the siege of the uninvested fortifications of Richmond, within which the defending army, with all its lines of communication open, might remain indefinitely. It was no doubt from the perception of the altogether indecisive nature of this result that General Grant, after ten days passed along the Chickahominy, resolved to execute another

* "I propose to fight it out on this line, if it takes all summer."—Dispatch of May 11, 1864.

flank movement, which should throw the army to the south side of the James River. Now, as this change of base ended the operations on the "overland route," it would seem also to challenge a judgment on the merits of that enterprise, considered as a whole.

It has been seen that General Grant himself originally preferred to the overland march an operation against the communications of Richmond by a transfer of the army to a point on the coast. The results thus far accomplished on the former line would appear to justify his primal choice.

As the overland campaign was unsuccessful either in the destruction of Lee's army or the capture of Richmond, and as that line of operations was at length abandoned, the gross result would seem to be confined to whatever loss, material and moral, had been caused the opposing army. But it is not possible to measure aright this loss, unless it be considered in its relations with the cost at which it was purchased.

In this regard, it must be considered, the balance was very much in favor of the enemy. Grant's loss in the series of actions from the Wilderness to the Chickahominy reached the enormous aggregate of sixty thousand men put *hors du combat**—a number greater than the entire strength of Lee's

* I append a tabular statement of casualties in the Army of the Potomac in the battles of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, North Anna, and Cold Harbor.

Battles.	Dates.	Killed.		Wounded.		Missing.		Aggregate.
		Officers	Enlisted men.	Officers	Enlisted men.	Officers	Enlisted men.	
Wilderness..	May 5 to 12.	269	3,019	1,017	18,261	177	6,667	29,410
Spottsylvania	May 12 to 21.	114	2,032	259	7,697	31	248	10,381
North Anna.	May 21 to 31.	12	138	67	1,063	3	324	1,607
Cold Harbor	June 1 to 10.	144	1,561	421	8,621	51	2,355	13,153
		539	6,750	1,764	35,642	262	9,594	54,551

But to this must be added the casualties of the Ninth Corps, which, up to the battle of Cold Harbor, was independent of Meade's command. Counting these at five thousand, or less than one-half the average of the other corps, we obtain an aggregate of above sixty thousand men. It will be observed that the loss in officers was especially severe, reaching in all three thousand. These were generally the flower of the officers of the Army of the Potomac, the bravest of the brave men whose loss to the army was irreparable.

army at the opening of the campaign. He had inflicted on Lee a loss of twenty thousand—the ratio being one to three.* The Confederates, elated at the skilful manner in which they had constantly been thrust between Richmond and the Union army, and conscious of the terrible price in blood they had exacted from the latter, were in high spirit, and the *morale* of Lee's army was never better than after the battle of Cold Harbor.†

It is not often in war that a belligerent is in condition to afford a sacrifice thus disproportionate; nor can results thus achieved be accounted the proof and procedure of a high order of generalship. I shall endeavor to show this by a recurrence to those simple principles to which great military questions may almost always be reduced.

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* In stating the casualties of the Confederate army at twenty thousand, I place the aggregate somewhat higher than that obtained from the Confederate sources of information to which I have had access. General Lee's adjutant-general, in conversation with the writer, gave eighteen thousand as his impression of the loss. This number corresponds remarkably with that derived from a comparison of the force with which Lee opened the campaign and that present after the battle of Cold Harbor. The former was fifty-two thousand six hundred and twenty-six, and on May 31 it was forty-four thousand two hundred and forty-seven, the difference being somewhat above eight thousand. But meanwhile Lee had received accessions to his strength—seven thousand men under Pickett, from Petersburg, and two thousand under Breckenridge, from the Valley. This would make his loss, up to Cold Harbor, seventeen thousand; and adding one thousand for the casualties of that battle (an over-estimate), we obtain an aggregate of eighteen thousand.

† I have until lately taken a different view of the condition of Lee's army at this time, inferring that the severe strain to which it had been constantly subjected, must have shaken its *morale*. In first writing touching this part of the campaign, I used the following language: "There was one result of a purely moral order that sprang from this campaign that had, without doubt, a considerable influence on its issue. The very relentlessness with which General Grant dealt his blows, and sacrificed lives to deal these blows, assumed at length to the enemy the aspect of a remorseless fate; taught him that there was a hand at his throat that never would unloose its grasp, and shook him in advance with anticipated doom." In holding a different opinion of the condition of the Army of Northern Virginia at this time, I ground the statement on the unanimous and emphatic testimony of officers of that army

Having determined to advance upon Richmond by an overland march, it depended on General Grant's own will to give his operations what character he pleased. This, at least, was true after the battle of the Wilderness, which was an inevitable action, determined less by strategic or tactical considerations than by the moral condition of the opposing armies and their commanders.

Whatever was done after that should have been done to accomplish the ultimate result aimed at. This, however, was of a double nature—to destroy Lee's army, and to capture Richmond, covered by that army. The latter could only be effected by a carefully considered combination and direction of force. When the hostile army had succeeded in ensconcing itself within such intrenched lines as those of Spottsylvania, the North Anna, and the Chickahominy, the chances of dealing an effective blow were meagre indeed; while assaults, under such circumstances, were attended with a sacrifice of life enormous on the part of the assailants, and slight on the part of the defenders. The only possible result to be gained by such attacks was, therefore, the forcing of the enemy from his position.

But this might have been done without loss by a simple turning movement, and the principles of war admonish the use of this means in preference to an attack in front, in every case where, by this means, a position may be carried.* Moreover, this was the means by which, eventually, after a heavy waste of life, the enemy was dislodged from these lines. It results that such assaults were vain; and the campaign on the

* This principle in military art is too well established to require that it should be fortified by authority; but Napoleon, in a criticism on the conduct of Turenne in the campaign of 1655, sets forth the action of that general in a statement of principles so different from those followed by General Grant, that I cannot avoid citing it here. "Turenne," says he, "constantly observed the two maxims: 1st, Never attack a position in front, when you can obtain it by turning it; 2d, Avoid doing what the enemy wishes, and that simply because he does wish it. Shun the field of battle which he has reconnoitred and studied, and more particularly that in which he has fortified and intrenched himself."—Montholon and Gourgaud: Memoirs of Napoleon, vol. iii., p. 95.

overland route must be accounted a failure in this regard: that so far from accomplishing the result aimed at—to wit, the capture of Richmond and the destruction of Lee's force—the army began to work efficiently towards that end only when it left this line of operations, and took up a new one south of the James River.

General Grant has summed up his theory of action in a single phrase—to "hammer continuously;" and his conduct in this campaign ranks him with that class of generals who have been named Thor-strikers. But the mind of a great commander never moved on that principle alone, though the greatest have at times shown a fondness for the employment of brute masses in direct attacks, as was the case with Napoleon in 1812, in a partial eclipse of his genius.* The result of such assaults as that of Spottsylvania Courthouse and at Cold Harbor, in the latter of which the Army of the Potomac lost at least twenty men to Lee's one, presents the *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory of "hammering." And besides, General Grant's best successes were accomplished only when, departing from his own principle, he manœuvred as well as attacked.

It may indeed be said that, as the resources of the Confederacy were well-nigh exhausted, while those of the North were still ample, a continuance of even such unequal exchange of life as was made in this campaign would finally result in the destruction of the enemy. But this assertion omits the important consideration that war is sustained quite as much by the moral energy of a people as by its material resources, and that the former must be active to bring out and make available the latter. It has not unfrequently occurred that, with abundant resources, a nation has failed in war by the sapping of the animating principle in the minds of its citizens. For armies are things visible and formal, circumscribed by

* "In 1812, a decided taste for direct attacks began to manifest itself in him —a taste for the pleasure of employing force, and a kind of disdain for the concurrence of art and skilful combinations. He conquered at the Moskwa, but with immense losses and unimportant results."—Marmont: Spirit of Military Institutions, p. 186.

time and space; but the soul of war is a power unseen, bound up with the interests, convictions, passions of men. Now, so gloomy was the military outlook after the action on the Chickahominy, and to such a degree by consequence had the moral spring of the public mind become relaxed, that there was at this time great danger of a collapse of the war. The history of this conflict truthfully written will show this.* Had not success elsewhere come to brighten the horizon, it would have been difficult to have raised new forces to recruit the Army of the Potomac, which, shaken in its structure, its valor quenched in blood, and thousands of its ablest officers killed and wounded, was the Army of the Potomac no more.

It would be interesting to institute a detailed comparison between the overland campaign towards Richmond and the campaign of Sherman towards Atlanta. These operations were parallel; but the conduct of the commanders was very different. General Sherman, rarely assaulting, treated each position taken up by Johnston as a fortress; and by intrenching in front of his opponent's works, he was able both to cover his own lines and gradually accumulate on a flank a force so menacing to his antagonist's communications as to compel him to abandon each successive stronghold. Thus, by repeated leaps in advance, and with comparatively little loss, he reached his goal, Atlanta.†

General Grant also effected turning movements of the same kind; but these were rarely undertaken until after a frightful sacrifice of life in the attempt to force a direct issue. Whatever adverse criticism history may make on this campaign will probably turn mainly on the question of the utility of these

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* The archives of the State Department, when one day made public, will show how deeply the Government was affected by the want of military success, and to what resolutions the Executive had in consequence come.

† General Johnston, whose very words, in conversation with the writer, are employed above, added a significant statement. He said he believed, at the beginning of the campaign, that he could beat Sherman; and, said he, "*I know I should have beaten him, had he made such assaults on me as General Grant did on Lee.*"

attacks, and on the tactical execution of the operations, which was often much inferior to the conception. The flank marches were conducted with great skill, and the movements of the columns, with a constantly shifting base, present a study highly interesting and instructive to those who concern themselves with the larger questions of war.

XII.

THE SIEGE OF PETERSBURG.

JUNE, 1864—MARCH, 1865.

I.

THE CHANGE OF BASE.

THE determination of General Grant to transfer the army, by a flank march, to the south side of the James River, involved considerations of a wholly different order from those concerned in the repeated turning movements which he had made to dislodge Lee from the intrenched positions held by him. These were simply manœuvres of grand tactics, delicate indeed in their nature, but they did not carry the army away from its line of operations, nor from the defensive line as regards Washington, which it all the time covered. The resolution to cross the James necessitated the total abandonment of that system of action which aimed, while operating against the enemy offensively, to directly defend the national capital.

Now, although in the defence of places, it is frequently more efficacious to assume a line of operation that seems to abandon the point to be guarded and deliver it up to the enemy, than to place one's self directly in front of it, it must be borne in mind that General Grant was acting under an Administration that was not only incapable of appreciating such considerations, which indeed belong to the higher part of war, but an Administration that was, from political motives, strongly opposed to a removal of the army from the

overland line of advance against Richmond. Moreover, the operation was in itself one of great delicacy, a change of base being pronounced by the foremost master of war "the ablest manœuvre taught by military art." *

General Grant manifested as much moral firmness in adopting a line of action which, adverse though it was to the wishes of his Government, he felt to be prescribed by the highest military considerations, as he showed ability in executing this difficult operation. The measure itself was not only entirely conformable to the true principles of war, but its execution reflects high credit on the commander, and merits the closest study.

Immediately after the battle of Cold Harbor, the Ninth Corps, then holding the extreme right of the line, had been withdrawn from its position and posted between the Fifth Corps, which then became the right of the line, and the Eighteenth. On the 6th, the Fifth Corps was retired and massed in rear of the centre. The Ninth Corps then became again the right of the line. On the 7th, the Second Corps, then forming the left of the line, being stretched to the Chickahominy, the Fifth was transferred to that flank to extend it as far as Dispatch Station on the York River Railroad. At this date, two divisions of cavalry under Sheridan were sent to destroy more effectually the Central Railroad.

By the gradual refusal of the right flank and development of the left, the army was placed within an easy march of the lower crossings of the Chickahominy—Warren's corps being but ten miles from Long Bridge. On the night of the 12th of June the movement to the James was begun.

Warren, preceded by Wilson's cavalry division, took the lead, seized the crossing of the Chickahominy at Long Bridge, and made dispositions to mask the movement of the army. Hancock's corps then followed the Fifth, and marched to Wilcox's Landing on the left bank of the James. The corps of Wright and Burnside, by an exterior route, crossed at

* Napoleon: Memoirs, vol. iii., p. 203.

Jones' Bridge and marched to Charles City, on the James. Smith's command marched to White House, where it took transports and returned to Bermuda Hundred by water. The trains made the passage of the Chickahominy by a bridge at Coles' Ferry.

The march of fifty-five miles across the Peninsula was made in two days, and with perfect success. It was covered from the enemy's observation by a skilful feint made by Warren, who threatened direct advance on Richmond by the route of White Oak Swamp. After crossing the Chickahominy at Long Bridge, Warren threw Crawford's division forward on the New Market road, while Wilson's cavalry division, taking the advance, drove the enemy's mounted force across White Oak Swamp. Warren lay in this vicinity during the day, covering all the routes by which the enemy might come down from Richmond to observe or disturb the movement; and under cover of his array, the whole army marched towards the James.

Lee, of course, discovered the withdrawal on the morning of the 13th. He, however, made no attempt to follow up, but retired towards Richmond. During the afternoon, a body of infantry came down the New Market road; but finding Warren's force in line of battle, it made no attack, contenting itself with intrenching in plain sight. It is probable that this menace by Warren deceived Lee as to Grant's actual purpose, and caused him to anticipate a direct advance on Richmond by the river routes. But, meantime, the army had reached the James below Harrison's Landing, and was prepared to pass to the south side. Here a considerable delay was caused by the non-arrival of the ponton-bridges;* but means of transport being at hand, Hancock's corps was ferried

* It turned out that the ponton-bridge for the wagon-train over the Chickahominy at Coles' Ferry was too short by half its length; so that the army ponton-train was sent to piece it out. By this means a day was lost; and rather than run the very remote risk of losing a wagon-train, the commander ran the very positive risk of losing Petersburg.

across at Wilcox's Landing, and landed on the south bank at Windmill Point. During the night of the 14th, the ponton-bridge was laid across the James at Douthard's, a short distance below Hancock's point of passage.* By noon of the 16th the whole army was on the south side of the James.

While the Army of the Potomac was thus making the overland march across the Peninsula, General Smith's command had returned to Bermuda Hundred, whence it proceeded upon an operation that had an important bearing on the campaign.

Upon debarking at Bermuda Hundred during the night of the 14th, Smith's column was by General Butler put in motion to seize Petersburg, an abortive attempt to capture which had been made a few days before by a part of his force.† The possession of this place as a *point d'appui* for the ulterior operations of the Army of the Potomac was of prime importance. Being joined by the cavalry division of Kautz and the division of colored troops under Hinks, Smith's force, during the night of the 14th, passed to the south side of the Appomattox on a ponton-bridge, and pushed forward, on the morning of the 15th, towards Petersburg, distant seven miles. The advance was made in three columns—Kautz, with the cavalry,

* This bridge was a notable achievement in ponton engineering, being over two thousand feet in length, and the channel boats anchored in thirteen fathoms of water. It was begun during the forenoon of the 14th and was completed by midnight. The site for the bridge was selected and the approaches prepared by Brigadier-General Weitzel, chief-engineer Department of Virginia and North Carolina; and the bridge was laid under direction of Brigadier-General Benham.

† This attempt was made on the 10th of May, two days before the Army of the Potomac began its change of base. The expedition was made by an infantry force under General Gillmore, and a cavalry force under General Kautz. The cavalry carried the works on the south side, and penetrated well in towards the town, but was forced to retire. General Gillmore, finding the works which he approached very strong, and deeming an assault impracticable, returned to Bermuda Hundred without attempting one.—Grant: Report of Operations, p. 10.

to threaten the line of fortifications near the Norfolk and Petersburg Railroad, and at the same time protect the left flank of the infantry; Hinks' division, in rear of Kautz, tc take position across the Jordan's Point road, as near as possible to the enemy's works; Brooks' division to follow Hinks, and take position on his right; Martindale's division, on the extreme right, to proceed, by the river-road, and strike the City Point Railroad.*

After an advance of two miles, the cavalry struck a line of rifle-trenches, near the City Point Railroad, defended by infantry and armed with a light battery. Upon this, Kautz was withdrawn to the left, and the colored division thrown forward to carry the line—a duty that was executed in a spirited manner, and one gun captured. This unexpected affair delayed the column until about nine A. M. No further obstacle was encountered, and after a march of a couple of miles, the force brought up in front of the fortifications enveloping Petersburg from the south. It was noon before all the troops could be brought up.†

On reconnoitring the position, it was found to be defended

* Smith: Report of Operations against Petersburg.

† It may be observed that this statement of the time of the arrival of the column before the fortifications of Petersburg is at variance with the statement of General Graut, who asserts that General Smith "confronted the enemy's pickets near Petersburg before daylight."—Report, p. 12. The statement above made is based on the official reports of General Smith and his division commanders. Without inquiring too curiously in regard to this matter, it is enough to say, that the assertion of the lieutenant-general is not in conformity with a series of established facts in regard to the sequence of events on the morning of the 15th. Thus, it was some time after daylight before the column began to move from its point of passage of the Appomattox at Broadway. It was then brought to a halt by the line of rifle-pits already mentioned, and it was after nine o'clock before it got under way again. It is probably this line of rifle-pits that the lieutenant-general means when he speaks of "confronting the enemy near Petersburg." Moreover, this affair caused a further delay; for the carrying of these trenches had thrown General Hinks out of his assigned position on the left, and as he knew the country better than any one present, it was necessary to halt the column until he could move by the flank to his place. The head of the column arrived before the Petersburg fortifications between ten and eleven, but it was three before the force was up and deployed in position.

by a strong line of redans, and connected, though incompletely, by very formidable rifle-pits; while the approach was over a broad low valley perfectly swept by the artillery of the works, and cut up by ditches and ravines. In the centre the line formed a salient, covered by a powerful profiled work, heavily flanked by earthworks and rifle-trenches *en échelon*.

General Smith had been informed that the fortifications were such that "cavalry could ride over them"—a representation that did not turn out to be justified by experience; for Kautz, who, with his mounted division, essayed to work his way round on the left, found himself completely estopped by a heavy fire, and in front the approaches were discovered to be so covered by the play of artillery from the works, that from every point on which Smith attempted to place batteries to silence the enemy's fire the guns were speedily driven off.* It could not be detected that any heavy force of infantry was manning the fortification; but it was not judged probable that so considerable an artillery force would be there without support.

After surveying the ground and making his dispositions, which consumed all the afternoon, General Smith, thinking that the assault of the works by a column would, from the fire of the enemy's guns, cost too great a sacrifice, determined to try a heavy line of skirmishers. Accordingly, towards seven P. M.,† a cloud of tirailleurs was advanced from the divisions

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* "Wherever I went on the line, I found a heavy cross-fire of artillery from the enemy. The few artillery positions I could find I tried to get our guns to open from; but they were always driven in by the superior fire of artillery from earthworks."—Smith: Report of Operations before Petersburg.

† The determination to attack in the manner above described was formed by General Smith at five P. M., but a delay of above an hour occurred here, owing to the fact that "the chief of artillery had, upon his own responsibility, taken his guns to the rear, and unhitched the horses to water."—Smith: Report of Operations before Petersburg. Now, as an interval of five or six hours had passed between the time of Smith's arrival and his resolution to assault, it may be a point of inquiry what he was doing during this time. General Grant makes this delay the ground of implied censure. "For some reason that I have never been able to satisfactorily understand," says he, "General Smith

of Hinks, on the left, Brooks in the centre, and Martindale on the right (the rest of whose command awaited in line of battle to follow up any success), and, under a sharp infantry fire, carried the line. Brooks captured the works on the salient, with several hundred prisoners and four guns, which, double-shotted with canister, had been kept in waiting for the expected column of assault. Hinks on the left, and Martindale on the right, followed up the success, the colored troops carrying four of the redoubts with their artillery.

Thus auspiciously opened the operations on the south side of the James; the lines of Petersburg—defended, as it proved, by an inconsiderable force, and by local militia made up of boys and old men of the town—were carried. But as it was almost dark when the operations I have described closed, the troops rested on their arms in the works gained, without the possession either of Petersburg or the line of the Appomattox—an event whence sprang a long Iliad of woes.

During the day on which these events in front of Petersburg were occurring, the Army of the Potomac still continued the laborious process of filing across the James, and at the same time Lee was passing his army to the south side above, near Drury's Bluff. By the morning of the 15th, however, the same morning on which Smith moved towards Petersburg, Hancock's corps had been all ferried to the south side of the James, and it would have been a simple matter to have directed that corps on Petersburg, to unite with Smith's command. Had this been done, Petersburg and the line of the Appomattox

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did not get ready to assault the enemy's main line until near sundown." Now, although this censure partially rests on the ground that General Smith reached the position "before daylight"—an assertion traversed by the fact that he did not arrive until noon—there may still remain a residue of blame. General Smith might possibly have assaulted several hours before he actually did, had he chosen to take the risk of attacking without reconnoissance. It is likely enough that Sheridan, had he been present, instead of Smith, would have done so. But this involves no foundation for a charge of dereliction of duty—it is only a question of choice between two different methods of action—the method which, taking great risks, may either lose greatly or greatly gain, and that which works by methodical procedure.

would have been in possession of the Union force before night. The circumstance by which it failed to be done forms one of the most curious episodes in the conduct of this campaign.

It would seem as though General Grant expected that Petersburg would fall an easy prey to Butler's force; for he left both General Meade and General Hancock wholly unaware of his design to secure the capture of that place. Hancock was directed to remain at the point at which he had crossed till rations, which General Butler was to send, should be received and issued, and then to march in the direction of Petersburg, and "*take up a position where the City Point Railroad crosses Harrison's Creek.*" After waiting till about ten o'clock in the forenoon, and finding that the expected rations did not arrive, he ordered the forward march of his column towards his assigned position on Harrison's Creek—a position which was marked on a map furnished him from headquarters, and on which it was located at about four miles from Petersburg, and between that place and City Point. As it proved, however, the map was utterly incorrect, and Harrison's Creek, instead of being at the locality indicated on the map, was miles away, and actually inside the enemy's lines.

At length, at half-past five in the afternoon, while pushing forward to reach this mythical objective, Hancock received a dispatch from General Grant, directing him to use all haste in getting up to the assistance of General Smith, who, as the paper stated, had attacked Petersburg* and carried the outer works in front of that place.

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*As the circumstances attending the non-capture of Petersburg are likely to give rise to much discussion, I shall here set forth with more particularity of detail such facts as concern the march of Hancock s column. The waiting for rations, which caused a delay of several hours during the morning of the 15th, cannot be regarded as having any important bearing on the question, seeing that General Hancock would not have waited had he known that Petersburg was to have been attacked. The column was put in motion at half-past ten A. M., and the distance from Windmill Point, whence Hancock's corps started, is about twenty miles. Birney's division had the advance on the Prince George Courthouse road, while Barlow's division moved by the Old Courthouse road. The leading division was conducted on the former road by the

This order, which was the first intimation General Hancock had received that Petersburg was to be attacked that day, or that General Smith was operating against it,* met him when he was some miles distant from Petersburg. He immediately hastened forward his command, but was unable to join General Smith till after the attack had been made; and, although

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chief of staff to General Hancock, who was furnished with a map on which the position to be reached behind Harrison's Creek was marked. But the map proved to be utterly worthless—the only roads laid down on it being widely out of the way. The staff-officer, however, bestirred himself to obtain information of the country from negro guides, and this being communicated to General Hancock, he judged that the speediest way to get to the position he was directed to occupy would be to turn the head of the column from the Prince George Courthouse road towards Old Courthouse, then by a cross-road get behind Harrison's Creek. Accordingly, Birney's and Gibbon's divisions were turned to the right, leaving the Prince George Courthouse road within six miles of Petersburg before three P. M. At half-past five P. M., as the column neared Old Courthouse, the dispatch from General Grant, directing the march to join Smith, was received. Fortunately, this came to hand just as the head of Birney's division was passing a country road leading directly towards Petersburg, and the column (Birney's and Gibbon's troops) was turned in that direction, arriving at Smith's position as the assault was over. No time had been lost on the march during the day, and the circumstance of Hancock's non-arrival at an earlier hour is due exclusively to the fact that he was not directed on Petersburg, and had no intimation, until between five and six P. M., that it was to be attacked. Had he been so informed, he could readily have joined Smith early in the afternoon, by marching directly towards Petersburg. The best hours of the day were spent in marching by an incorrect map, in search of a designated position which, as it was not in existence as described, could naturally not be found. With these facts, which are of official authenticity, it will not be difficult to judge who is responsible for the non-capture of Petersburg. As Lieutenant-General Grant states that he "threw forward the Army of the Potomac, by divisions, as rapidly as could be done" (Report, p. 12), and as the manner in which he threw it forward is sufficiently manifest in the fact that neither General Meade nor General Hancock knew that Petersburg was to be attacked even, I leave the reconciliation of this discrepancy to those better equipped for the task.

* "I desire to say here that the messages from Lieutenant-General Grant, and from General Smith, which I received between five and six P. M. on the 15th, were the first and only intimation I had that Petersburg was to be attacked that day. Up to that hour I had not been notified from any source that I was expected to assist General Smith in assaulting that city."—Hancock Report of the Fifth Epoch of the Campaign of 1864.

he then proffered his troops to General Smith, that officer had determined to suspend operations for the night, judging it wiser to hold securely what had been won, than, by attempting to reach the bridges, to risk the loss of all the gain.*

Whether General Smith, in thus acting, did ill or well, may be a question; but there can be no question as to who is really responsible for the failure to take Petersburg. This is no other than the lieutenant-general himself.† Yet, as the event proved, it was fortunate it was not taken. The resolution on the part of the Confederates to try out the issue of the war there, gave the Union army an excellent line of operations on an easy base; whereas, had Petersburg fallen, Lee would have retired from Richmond to the interior, thus greatly complicating matters.

During the night of the 15th, the van of Lee's army reached the town, and men of a very different mettle from the crude soldiers to whom its defence had been intrusted silently deployed in line of battle. In the morning it was found that a new line of works had been thrown up around the town, defended by a large force already present, which was constantly re-enforced by the rapidly arriving Confederate corps. It was soon manifest that the "Cockade City," which the day before was the open prize of the first captor, would demand for its possession a battle or a siege. As the event

* It will probably always remain one of those questions respecting which men's opinions will differ, whether General Smith did well or ill in not pushing into Petersburg, and seizing the bridges of the Appomattox. His conduct was shaped by considerations thus stated in his official report: "We had thus broken through the strong line of rebel works, but heavy darkness was upon us, and I had heard some hours before that Lee's army was rapidly crossing at Drury's Bluff. I deemed it wiser to hold what we had, than, by attempting to reach the bridges, to lose what we had gained and have the troops meet with a disaster. I knew, also, that some portion of the Army of the Potomac was coming to aid us, and therefore the troops were placed so as to occupy the commanding positions and wait for daylight."—Smith: Report of Operations before Petersburg.

† There is on file in the archives of the army a paper bearing this indorsement, by General Meade: *"Had General Hancock or myself known that Petersburg was to be attacked, Petersburg would have fallen."*

proved, Grant was compelled to sit down before it in formal beleaguerment, and it was not till after the lapse of near a twelvemonth that, in the last act of the eventful drama of the war, Petersburg fell.

II.

THE ARMY BEFORE PETERSBURG.

In its strategic relations to Richmond, Petersburg may be defined as a fortress thrust forward on the flank of the Confederate capital. The great lines of supply for an army covering Richmond—the Lynchburg Railroad, James River Canal, and Danville Railroad—run into that city from a westerly and southwesterly direction. But Petersburg, securely held, easily holds off at arm's-length any force threatening the communications of the Confederate capital. It is distant twenty-two miles south from Richmond, with which city it is connected by the Petersburg and Richmond Railroad, while by means of the Lynchburg Railroad it taps the great Danville line, and from the south it receives the Weldon and the Norfolk railroads. In case it should lose the two latter, as would be likely if assailed by a force following the line of operations of the Union army, there remained the two former, which from their situation are almost unassailable.

Invested with this value, Petersburg could not fail to be a possession coveted with equal eagerness by each combatant. This was indeed the case: Grant had designed to seize it before the Confederate army could join the meagre local force left for its defence; and Lee, as soon as the transfer of the Army of the Potomac to the south side of the James had plainly declared his rival's purpose, drew his columns also to the south bank and hurried them forward to Petersburg, where they began to arrive during the hours of darkness that followed the assault on the evening of the 15th of June.

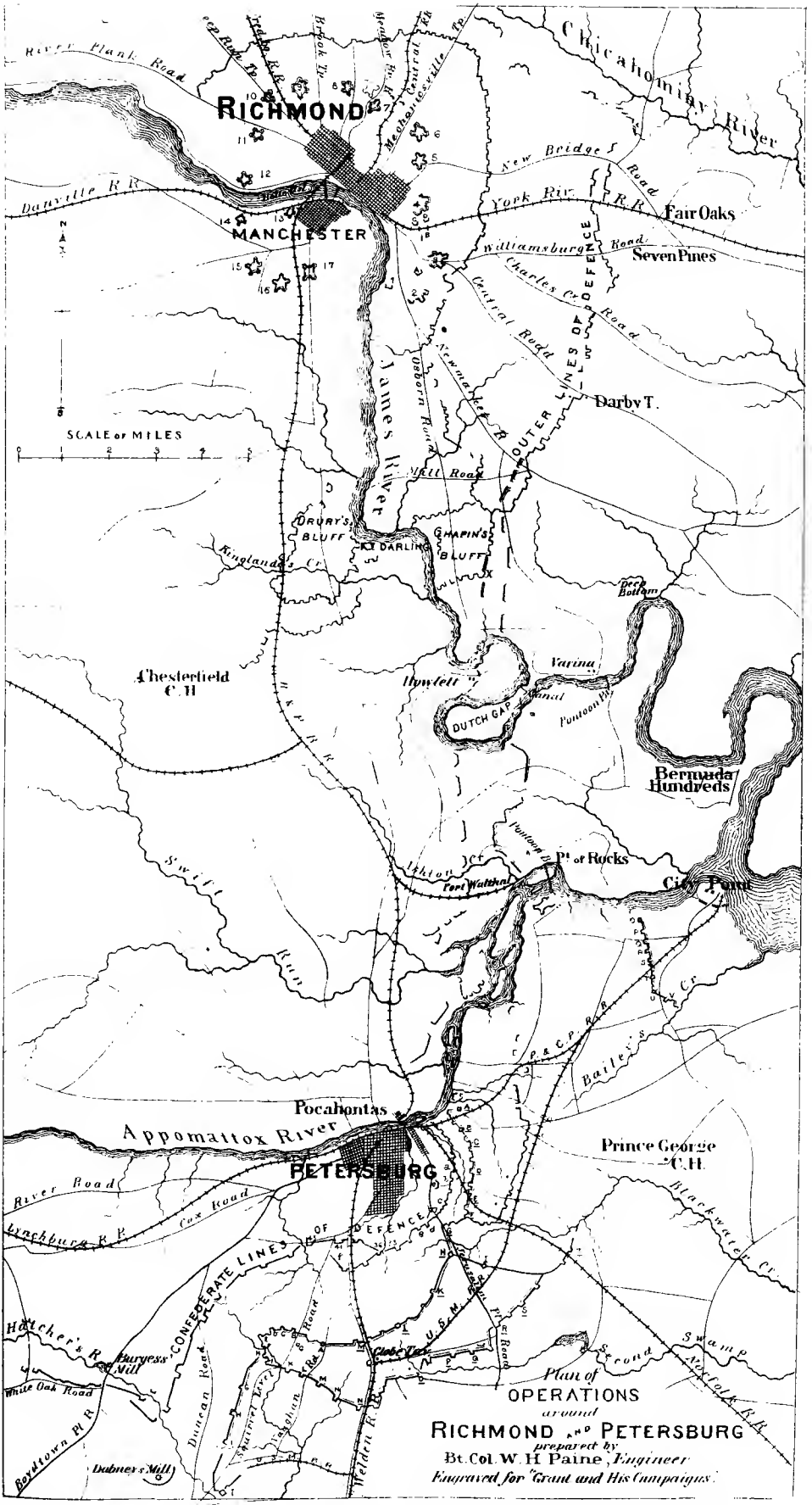
How nearly Petersburg then fell a prize to Smith's *coup de main* has already been seen. But night sufficed to throw into the city a Confederate force so considerable as to insure that its capture would cost a severe struggle.

The morning of the 16th found on the Union side present before Petersburg no more than the two corps of Smith and Hancock: the remaining corps were distant several hours' march. The centre of the line of redans enveloping the city from the south had been penetrated the night before, and the positions then gained were securely held by the Union force. But the Confederates clung tenaciously to a hastily improvised line close in the rear of the lost point; and this on its left flank ran into portions of the original system of earthworks that remained still in the enemy's hands.

But although by the morning of the 16th Lee had succeeded in throwing into Petersburg a considerable body of troops, it was outnumbered by the Union force present, while the latter was also in position to be re-enforced more rapidly than the Confederates. The situation, therefore, was not even yet of a nature to forbid the hope of securing Petersburg, or at least securing all the commanding ground before the heavy Confederate re-enforcements should arrive. General Hancock, to whom, in the absence of Generals Grant or Meade, the command of the field fell, was fully alive to the importance of so doing, and he had the night before instructed his division officers, Generals Birney and Gibbon, that all such ground between their positions and the Appomattox should be attacked and taken at or before daylight.* These instructions were not promptly complied with, nor indeed did the efforts of these officers possess any serious character. This forfeited the one opportunity that remained; and when, later in the morning, reconnoissances were pushed forward, it was found the enemy had secured the commanding positions and greatly strengthened his line at all important points.†

* Hancock: Report of the Fifth Epoch of the Campaign of 1864.

† Among these dominating points was the high ground at the position which will be found marked on the accompanying map as the "Avery House."


RICHMOND
MANCHESTER
Chicahominy River
Fair Oaks
Seven Pines
Darby T.
OUTER LINES OF DEFENCE
James River
SCALE OF MILES
DRURY'S BLUFF
CHAPIN'S BLUFF
Chesterfield C.H.
Howlett
DUTCH GAP
Varina
Bermuda Hundreds
Pt. of Rocks
City Point
Pocahontas
Appomattox River
PETERSBURG
Prince George C.H.
CONFEDERATE LINES OF DEFENCE
Burgess' Mill
Dabney's Mill
Plan of OPERATIONS around RICHMOND AND PETERSBURG
prepared by Bt. Col. W. H. Paine, Engineer
Engraved for "Grant and His Campaigns."

Meantime, Hancock was admonished by General Meade to refrain from attack until the remaining corps of the Army of the Potomac should have arrived. Of these, the Ninth reached the front at noon, and the Fifth at dusk. An assault was ordered to be made about four P. M. by Hancock and Burnside—Smith on the right to demonstrate merely. At the appointed time the assault was made by Hancock, supported by two brigades of the Ninth on his left. The advance was spirited and forcible, and resulted, after a close struggle in which the troops suffered heavily, in driving the enemy back some distance along the whole line.* The severe fighting ceased at dark, though during the night the Confederates made several ineffectual sallies to regain the lost ground. The same day an advance was made by Butler's force from Bermuda Hundred for the purpose of destroying the Petersburg and Richmond Railroad; but after reaching this point it was compelled to withdraw, in consequence of the pressure of a heavy Confederate column advancing towards Petersburg from the direction of Richmond.†

Here there were a large redoubt and rifle-trenches that had been empty early in the morning; but these the delay permitted the Confederates soon to occupy. It should be mentioned, however, that when an advance was at length made in the morning, Egan's brigade of Birney's division attacked and carried in a very spirited manner a small redoubt occupied by the enemy opposite Birney's left.

* The enemy succeeded in holding this temporary line until the completion of the line on "Cemetery Hill." When Hancock advanced the next day, the Confederates retired over "Hare's Hill."

† The urgency for troops at Petersburg had caused the withdrawal of the main Confederate force from Butler's front at Bermuda Hundred. Butler then threw forward Terry's command, which advancing found that the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad had been left quite uncovered. It appears that General Lee's orders were that the troops in front of Butler should not be withdrawn till Longstreet's column, *en route* towards Petersburg, should arrive to relieve it. But instead of waiting the arrival of Longstreet, they withdrew on the morning of the 16th. One part of Terry's force accordingly proceeded to destroy the track, while the other was moved up the turnpike in the direction of Richmond. The latter, however, had not advanced far when it encountered the head of a hostile column hastening down from Richmond towards Petersburg, whereupon Terry withdrew to Bermuda Hundred.

The attack was renewed by Hancock and Burnside on the morning of the 17th. The former succeeded in taking some important ground on his front.* The attack of the latter was directed against a part of the enemy's original line of works that had not yet been carried, and resulted in the capture of a redoubt, four guns, and several hundred prisoners.† In the afternoon the Ninth Corps made another attack, in which Barlow's division of the Second Corps participated, losing heavily in killed, wounded, and prisoners.‡ After heavy fighting, and the failure of two attacks, Burnside succeeded in getting across a part of the enemy's line; but his left was pressed very hard and continually ground away, so that finally his line was at right angles across the enemy's. Crawford's division of Warren's corps was then put in on the left in support. It was already near dusk, and Crawford's troops became bewildered in the ravines, but advanced nevertheless, and his right went into the enemy's lines, capturing a number of prisoners and the flag of an Alabama regiment. The enemy had during the day made several sorties and sallies to regain the positions taken, and after dark leaped the breastwork Burnside had captured and drove him out. The loss during the day was heavy—numbering about four thousand men. These attacks had, however, established an integral line for the army.§

This result being accomplished, a general assault of the enemy's position was ordered for the morning of the 18th. When, however, the skirmishers moved forward, it was found that the enemy had abandoned the temporary line held by him, giving up what works remained of the original system of intrenchments, and had taken up a new and systematic line,

* This was the hill on which the Hare House stood, and on which Fort Steadman was afterwards erected.

† Meade: Report of the Campaign of 1864.

‡ Hancock: Report of the Fifth Epoch of the Campaign of 1864.

§ In the evening Smith's corps was relieved by troops of the Sixth Corps, and crossed the Appomattox to rejoin Butler's force at Bermuda Hundred. Martindale's division of his command, however, could not be withdrawn to advantage, and so continued to hold the extreme right.

drawn on commanding ground closer around Petersburg.* This required new dispositions, and the general assault was deferred till three o'clock in the afternoon. When made, it was a complete repulse at every point, and was attended with another mournful loss of life.†

The constant inspiration of these attacks had been the belief that Petersburg could be carried before Lee succeeded in yet bringing up the whole of his troops. The result convinced General Grant that this hope was now vain, and that further attack was equally so. The troops were therefore ordered to begin intrenching a systematic line. A few days' labor brought this into such condition that the front could be held by a part of the army, allowing the rest to be cut loose for manœuvres to the left. Accordingly, on the 21st, the Second and Sixth corps were dispatched on that flank to effect a closer envelopment of Petersburg on the South side. The Second Corps, having the lead, proceeded westward to the Jerusalem plankroad, which runs southward from Petersburg, nearly midway between the Norfolk and the Weldon railroads. After some skirmishing it established itself in a position on the west side of that road, connecting with Griffin's division of the Fifth Corps, which held post on the east side. During the night, the Sixth Corps coming up, extended to the left and rear of the Second Corps, and the cavalry divisions of Wilson and Kautz were sent to cut the Weldon and Southside railroads.

It had been designed to extend the left of the infantry by means of the Sixth Corps to the Weldon Railroad; but as the

* "On advancing, it was found that the enemy during the night had retired to a line about a mile nearer the city—the one he now occupies."—Meade: Report of the Campaign of 1864. (Made November, 1864).

† "About noon an unsuccessful assault was made by Gibbon's division, Second Corps. Martindale's advance was successful in occupying the enemy's skirmish line and making some prisoners. General Birney, temporarily commanding the Second Corps, then organized a formidable column, and about six P. M. made an attack, but without success. Later in the day, attacks were made by the Fifth and Ninth corps, with no better results."—Meade: Report of the Campaign of 1864.

indication of this purpose instantly developed very menacing demonstrations on the part of the enemy, the movement to the railroad was suspended, and General Birney, who at this time commanded the Second Corps, during a temporary disability of General Hancock,* was ordered to swing forward the left of the Second Corps, so as to envelop the right flank of the enemy's works. This movement, made by the divisions of Mott and Barlow (pivoting on the right division under Gibbon, which was already in close contact with the enemy), was executed without reference to the Sixth Corps, and, of course, carried the Second away from that corps, leaving, as the former advanced, a wide and widening gap between the two. The operation had nearly been completed, Mott's division had secured its position on the left of Gibbon, and was intrenching itself, and Barlow's division was coming into place on the left of Mott, when a force of the enemy, composed of part of Hill's corps, advancing in column by brigades, penetrated the interval between the left of the Second and the right of the Sixth corps. The shock was soon felt on the flanks of both these corps, but especially on the left of the Second. Barlow's division, rolled up like a scroll, recoiled in disorder, losing several hundred prisoners. Mott, on his right, fell back, but not without a like loss; and the enemy, still pressing diagonally across the front of the corps, struck Gibbon's now exposed left flank and rear, swept off and captured several entire regiments and a battery, and carried Gibbon's intrenchments—the rest of the original line of the Second Corps remaining intact.

The shattered corps was reformed on its original line, when the enemy made a brisk attack on Miles' brigade, but was easily repulsed. The Confederates, however, held the intrenchments taken from Gibbon until they had removed the captured guns, only a feeble effort being made to retake them. They then withdrew as suddenly as they had made their swoop, carrying with them twenty-five hundred prisoners, and many standards. The disaster was due no less to the lack of spirit displayed by the troops than to the unwise order for

* Caused by the outbreaking of a wound received at Gettysburg.

the advance of the two corps. The Sixth Corps also lost several hundred prisoners. Thus this operation, which had been designed against the enemy's communications by the Weldon Railroad, resulted simply in a considerable extension of the line of the army to the left. The additional ground occupied gave no advantages whatever, and the operation could not be considered a gain in any respect.

The co-operative cavalry expedition under Generals Wilson and Kautz met with more success. Striking the Weldon Railroad at Reams' Station, the force destroyed the depot and several miles of the track. The columns then proceeded to the Southside Railroad—Wilson's division reaching it about fifteen miles from Petersburg and destroying it thence to Nottoway Station, where he met General W H. F. Lee's division of cavalry, and, after a sharp conflict, defeated him. Kautz reached Burkesville, the junction of the Southside and Danville railroads, on the afternoon of the 23d. At this point he damaged the track considerably, and then moved to Meherrin Station, where he formed a junction with Wilson's column on the 24th. The two then destroyed the road as far as Roanoke Bridge, a distance of twenty-five miles. Further progress, however, was impeded by the enemy, who was found in force and could not be dislodged. In returning, Wilson met, on the evening of the 28th, the enemy's cavalry, massed at the Weldon Railroad crossing of Stoney Creek, where he had a severe engagement. He then made a detour by his left, and endeavored to reach Reams' Station, presuming it to be in possession of the Union force; but he here encountered not only the Confederate cavalry but a hostile infantry. Being largely outnumbered, he was overwhelmed and forced to retire, with the loss of his trains and artillery and a considerable number of prisoners.* He succeeded in crossing the Nottoway, however, and escaped within the Union lines

* "In the various conflicts with the enemy's cavalry, in their late expedition against the railroads, besides their killed and wounded left on the field, one thousand prisoners, thirteen pieces of artillery, and thirty wagons and ambulances were taken."—Lee: Dispatch of July 1st.

by their left and rear with the remnant of his shattered force. The first intimation General Meade had of Wilson's situation, was in intelligence brought by one of his aids, who cut his way through from Reams' Station. The Sixth Corps was immediately sent thither, and Sheridan ordered up with the cavalry; but before they could reach that point the affair was over and the enemy had withdrawn.

Such raids on the communications of the enemy had frequently been made by both armies, and generally with impunity; but the disastrous upshot of this expedition showed that such detached columns operating far from the main body must always be in a perilous situation, if there be vigilance and vigor on the part of the antagonist. The present raid had inflicted considerable damage to the Confederate communications; but it was soon repaired, and it is doubtful whether the temporary advantage gained over the enemy more than balanced the losses in men and material suffered by the expeditionary force.

Two weeks of exhausting effort thus passed; but the lines of Petersburg had withstood all the shocks they had received. There now remained no hope of carrying the city by assault. Indeed, the Union army, terribly shaken as well in spirit as in material substance, by the repeated attacks on intrenched positions it had been called on to make, was in a very unfit moral condition to undertake any new enterprise of that character.

In these preliminary operations against Petersburg, which may be brought together under the definition of the "period of assaults," though no large action had taken place, the rolls of the army showed a loss of fifteen thousand men. Lee had, with much address, taken advantage of every opportunity afforded him to thrust his rapier through the somewhat loose-jointed harness of his antagonist. Though he had struck no vital blow, he had yet drawn blood, inflicted many smarts, and gained time to draw around Petersburg a system of defences that bade defiance to assault.

III.

THE LINES OF PETERSBURG.

It required no clearer demonstration than that already given in the unpromising results of the several assaults made against the Confederate lines, to show that the difficult problem of the capture of Petersburg had passed beyond that stage at which success might be hoped from expedients, partial efforts, and *coups de main*. The task was one of the first magnitude, in which an auspicious issue was only to be expected from systematic operations and a well-considered combination of effort. This will be manifest from a brief description of the relative situation of the opposing armies.

Growing in strength day by day, the Confederate line of defence had, by the beginning of July, become so formidable that assault was pronounced impracticable by the chiefs of artillery and of engineers.* This line consisted of a chain of redans, connected by infantry parapets of a powerful profile, while the approaches were completely obstructed by abatis, stakes, and entanglements. Beginning at the south bank of the Appomattox, it enveloped Petersburg on the east and south, stretching westward beyond the furthest reach of the left flank of the Union army. A continuation of the same system to the north side of the Appomattox protected the city and the Petersburg and Richmond railroad against attack from the direction of the front held by Butler's force at Bermuda Hundred. The defence of Richmond was provided for by its own chain of fortifications.

The attitude assumed by Grant before Petersburg was somewhat peculiar. As the Union lines were drawn, the defending force was not under siege, investment, or blockade;

* Report of an Examination of the Enemy's Lines, July 6th, by General Hunt, chief of artillery, and Major Duane, chief-engineer.

for its lines of communication were all open. Petersburg, in fact, was in the same situation as Sebastopol, when beleaguered by the Allies in the so-called siege—a term not applicable to the kind of operation practised in both these cases. This is of a character novel and modern, and may be better described as a partial investment, or an attitude of *watching*. There were, however, several manœuvres and operations open to the Union commander.

1. The first of these was a move resulting from that peculiar strategic relation of the contending armies by which, while Richmond was the ultimate objective of attack and point of defence, the actual struggle was waged before Petersburg, on the south side of the James, and twenty-two miles distant from the Confederate capital, situate on the north side of that river. A lodgment for the Union force on the north side of the James had early been secured by General Butler at Deep Bottom, only ten miles south of Richmond. Here a force under Foster held an intrenched camp, and communication with Bermuda Hundred was established by means of a ponton-bridge. Thus it was always practicable for General Grant, by a movement to the north bank of the James, to threaten Richmond by its direct approaches. These were, however, "observed" by General Lee, who, by ponton-bridges across the James, near Drury's Bluff, a few miles below Richmond, preserved his interior lines, and held the means of rapidly re-enforcing either wing. Yet, since General Grant could at any time take the initiative, it was always in his power to outrun any immediate action of his opponent.

2. The next course open to the Union commander was to operate against the railroad lines that fed Lee's army at Petersburg. These lead into that city from the south and west. They could be acted against, either by a gradual extension of the left flank, or by cutting loose a column of active operations powerful enough to meet any force the enemy might bring to meet the menace. The Weldon Railroad was within the scope of the former course, and, as will presently appear, it was soon afterwards seized and held,

and the left flank of the army extended to insure its tenure. The main lines of supply by the Southside and the Danville roads were, however, well covered by Lee's army. The distance from the position of the army before Petersburg to the nearest point at which the Southside Railroad could be struck is from ten to fifteen miles, and to Burkesville—which, as the junction of the Southside and the Danville roads, is the strategic key to all the Confederate communications of Petersburg and Richmond—the distance is near forty miles. These, therefore, could not be reached by any extension of the Union intrenched line to the left, without dangerously weakening the front covering Grant's depot at City Point; but they could be operated against by a column able to cut itself loose from its base.

3. In the relative situations of the opposing armies, the line to be guarded by Lee was between thirty and forty miles, running from southwest of Petersburg to northeast of Richmond. There was, accordingly, open to General Grant a a great variety of tactical combinations, compelling, on the part of the Confederates, continued motion to the greatest distances from flank to flank, and visiting concentration on one flank by a sudden blow on the other. There also remained the contingency of a good opening for direct assault, in case the Confederates should reduce the force within their lines of defence to meet these manœuvres.

In order to hold the actual front with a fractional force, and relieve as large a part of the army as possible for a column of active operations, the construction of a powerful line of redoubts was pushed forward, and a series of heavy batteries was placed in position to cover an assault, in case a suitable opening therefor should present itself. By the close of July, a system of earthworks covering the front then held by the army had been constructed and armed. Grant was then in position either to undertake direct assault or operate on the flanks of the Confederate line.

IV

THE MINE FIASCO.

As soon as the system of works had been completed, it was determined to make an assault on the enemy's position on Burnside's front, and it was resolved to work into the plan the explosion of a mine which that officer had prepared.

This enterprise had been undertaken some weeks previously by Burnside of his own motion, and was allowed to proceed rather by sufferance than sanction. Having at first excited only ridicule, the mine, now that it was finished, began to receive more serious consideration, and it was resolved to bring it into play in the proposed plan of assault. Burnside occupied a position very close to and within a hundred and fifty yards of the enemy's line,* which happened there to form an angle, that was covered by a fort. It was under this fort that the mine had been run. The location of the mine did not promise well, the fort to be destroyed being in a re-entrant of the enemy's line, and therefore exposed to an enfilading and reverse fire right and left.† Still, it was seen that if the crest of the ridge behind the fort, and distant from it by only four hundred yards, could be carried, it would secure the most important results, carrying with it Petersburg, and probably a large part of the enemy's artillery and infantry.‡

About the time fixed for the assault, which was the morning of the 30th of July, there happened a conjuncture of events that promised a happy bearing on the result. Four days before

* This was the position secured by Griffin's division, of Warren's corps, in the attack of the 18th of June.

† For proof of the disadvantageous location of the mine, see Meade's Report; Meade's testimony before the Court of Inquiry.—Report of the Conduct of the War, p. 125. Testimony of the chief-engineer.—Ibid.

‡ Meade's testimony.—Ibid., p. 126.

—that is, on the 26th of July—an expeditionary force under General Hancock, consisting of the Second Corps with two divisions of Sheridan's cavalry, had been sent to operate towards Richmond by the north side of the James. Hancock crossed at Deep Bottom on the night of the 26th, with instructions to proceed rapidly to Chapin's Bluff, where Lee had established ponton-bridges, that were his means of communication between the two parts of his army. Hancock was to prevent Confederate re-enforcements from being sent to the north side of the James, while Sheridan with his cavalry was to proceed to the Virginia Central Railroad, to operate towards Richmond, the works of which being thinly held were supposed to be open to a surprise.* As will presently appear, however, there were circumstances that thwarted the execution of this part of the plan.

Foster's lodgment at Deep Bottom had caused Lee to send a body of troops to observe him. This force held position on his immediate front, and had already made one or two unsuccessful sallies to dislodge him. Hancock determined, next morning, to disengage this force by a turning movement by the right, while Foster threatened it in front. The operation was successfully accomplished, and the skirmish line of Miles' brigade, of Barlow's division,† by a well-executed manœuvre, captured four guns. The enemy held this front weakly; and, when thus assailed, retired a short distance to another line of works, behind Bailey's Creek, where he effectually barred Hancock's approach to Chapin's Bluff. This position seemed so formidable that Hancock preferred to flank it. The cavalry, meanwhile, moved to the right, and, by one or two spirited charges, gained possession of some high, open ground, which it was hoped might enable it to get in the rear of the enemy's line. Night came on, however, before any thing was accomplished, and the movement being now

* Hancock: Report of the Expedition to Deep Bottom.

† The skirmish line was composed of the One Hundred and Eighty-third Pennsylvania, Twenty-eighth Massachusetts, and Twenty-sixth Michigan, under Colonel J. C. Lynch.

fully disclosed, Lee drew to this point a very heavy force from Petersburg. In the morning he assumed the offensive, drove back Sheridan from his advance on the New Market and Long Bridge roads, and, though that officer was able, by dismounting his troopers, to check and finally drive off his assailants, it became obvious that his proposed expedition was baulked.

During the 28th and following day, Hancock held a simply defensive attitude, Lee meanwhile concentrating so heavily against him that he finally had drawn to the north bank of the James five of the eight divisions of the Confederate army. Of this circumstance General Grant determined to take advantage; for, though the direct purpose of the move had failed, it had yet caused Lee so materially to weaken his force in front of Petersburg as to afford an excellent opportunity for the assault, which it was designed to make on Burnside's front. Hancock's move, therefore, assumed the character of a feint; and the expeditionary force was ordered that night to withdraw secretly from its position on the north side of the James, and return to the lines of Petersburg, to participate in the attack of the following morning.

It will have appeared, from the outline already given of the proposed assault, that it was an operation essentially of the nature of a *coup de main*. It involved the explosion of the mine, through the breach formed by which an assaulting column would then push forward to sweep the hostile line right and left, and crown the crest of the ridge. Thus the whole momentum of the action and the entire promise of the result centred in the corps to which the duty of assault was assigned.

In this state of facts, it would seem to be the dictate of prudence, and certainly has been the invariable practice of the great commanders, to select for the storming column the *élite* of the army—a rule that does not seem to have been followed in this case. It happened that the Ninth Army Corps, under General Burnside, held the front from which the assault was to be made. With no purpose of undertaking the

ungracious task of comparison, but with the simple desire of stating a matter of fact essential to the correct appreciation of the action and its result, it is due to say that that corps could not be considered the *élite* corps of the army. The old Ninth, than which there never was better, had been reduced by long and varied service to a mere nucleus, with which had been agglomerated (not *fused*) a mass of new, heterogeneous, and inferior material. The first division was largely made up of foot-artillerists and dismounted cavalry, and the fourth division was composed exclusively of Blacks. To such an extent had the *morale* of the Ninth Corps become impaired, that its inspecting officer a short time before the assault declared the three White divisions to be in so bad a condition that the division of Blacks was to be preferred for the duty.

If, in view of this circumstance, it be asked why another selection was not made, an answer does not readily present itself. There is, however, in Carnot's work, *De la Défence des Places Fortes*, a remarkable passage that closely touches this matter. "The reasons why our assaults occasionally fail," says he, "are, in my opinion, various. In the first place, it is a rule that the troops immediately on duty, or near the spot, generally storm or do whatever service may be required. These troops may be most unfit for it, and by this mode the good old custom is done away of employing grenadiers or chosen men for occasions of difficulty. There are no troops in the world that can be taken indiscriminately for brilliant services, and undoubtedly none more so than for storming works. Besides, the officer to whom the command falls may be very unfit for the particular service."

But, what is even more extraordinary than the selection itself, is the mode in which the selection was made. General Grant refused to permit the black division to be chosen for the assaulting column, and it remained to appoint one of the three divisions of white troops. General Burnside then resolved to determine the choice by casting lots—or, as General Grant has expressed it, by "pulling straws or tossing coppers." The lot fell to the first division, under command of

Brigadier-General Ledlie. With such a mode of determining such a question, need it be wondered that an elfish fate turned up of all the divisions the poorest—a division fitted neither in respect of its composition nor its commander for the glorious but exacting duty assigned it.

The hour for the explosion of the mine was fixed at half-past four in the morning of the 30th. At that hour the match was applied, but, owing to the defective fuse employed, the mine failed to explode. After waiting some time, a commissioned and a non-commissioned officer* volunteered for the perilous duty of entering the mine and ascertaining the cause of the failure. The fuse being relighted, the mine exploded at forty-two minutes past four in the morning. A solid mass of earth, through which the exploding powder blazed like lightning playing in a bank of clouds, arose slowly some two hundred feet into the air, and, hanging visibly for a few seconds, it subsided, and a heavy cloud of black smoke floated off. The explosion of the mine was the signal for a simultaneous outburst of artillery fire from the various batteries. This had the effect of soon silencing the enemy's guns.† The leading division under Ledlie then advanced to the charge. The *place d'armes* was, however, very restricted: no proper *débouchés* had been prepared for the assaulting column,‡ and the advance was made slowly and stragglingly.

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* Lieutenant Jacob Douty and Sergeant Henry Rees, of the Forty-eighth Pennsylvania Regiment.

† "On the morning of the 30th, as soon as the mine exploded, our fire opened along the whole line. The firing was from each piece slow, deliberate, and careful, partaking of the nature of target practice, and was very effective. The enemy's guns in front of the Fifth Corps were soon silenced, and his fire in front of the Ninth Corps confined to a battery on the hill behind the mine, and to one gun from another work south of the mine, which could not be effectually reached."—Hunt: Report of Artillery Operations.

‡ On this point Lieutenant-General Grant says: "I am satisfied that he [General Burnside] did not make the *debouchement* that he was ordered to make. I know that as well as I know any thing that I cannot exactly swear to."—Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 110. General Meade says: "There was a high parapet in front of our lines, an *abatis* and

On reaching the site of the fort, it was found to have been converted by the explosion into a huge crater one hundred and fifty feet long, sixty feet wide, and from twenty-five to thirty deep. Here the assaulting column sought shelter, though there was nothing to prevent its rushing forward and crowning the crest; for the enemy, paralyzed by the explosion, remained inactive for above half an hour. Portions of the other two divisions, under Generals Potter and Wilcox, then advanced, but they also huddled into the crater, or sought cover behind the breastworks, which had been vacated by the enemy for two or three hundred yards to the right and left of the mine. Here the troops of the several divisions becoming mixed up: a scene of disorder and confusion commenced, which seems to have continued to the end of the operations.*

In the mean time the enemy, rallying from the confusion incident to the explosion, began forming his infantry in a ravine to the right, and planting his artillery both on the right and left of the crater. Seeing this, one of the division commanders, General Potter, made a praiseworthy effort to extricate himself from the disgraceful coil, and charged towards the crest; but, owing to want of support, he was compelled to fall back. It was now seven A. M., more than two hours after Ledlie occupied the crater, yet he made no advance himself, and obstructed the efforts of other officers. In this state of facts, the more troops that were thrown in, the worse was the confusion; yet General Burnside threw forward the black division to essay an assault. Passing beyond the crater, the colored troops made an advance towards the crest, when, encountering a fire of artillery and infantry, they retired in great disorder through the troops in the crater, and back to the

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other obstacles to keep the enemy from us. Those obstacles should have been removed to enable our troops to move out promptly. There was but a small opening made, by which the Ninth Corps, fifteen thousand men, moved out by the flank."—Ibid., p. 35. See also the testimony of Major Duane, Ibid., p. 99 Warren, Ibid., p. 83.

* Meade: Report of the Battle of Petersburg

original lines.* After the repulse of the colored division, all semblance of offensive efforts ceased; Blacks and Whites tumbled pell-mell into the hollow of the exploded earthworks—a slaughter-pen in which shells and bombs, rained from the enemy's lines, did fearful havoc.† Failing to advance, it soon proved almost equally difficult to retreat, though parties of tens and twenties, crawling out, ran back as best they could. The enemy then made a sally towards the crater, but was repulsed. A second assault, however, shook the disjointed structure of the hapless mass, which, without head or direction, obeyed the instinct of *sauve qui peut*. Above four thousand were killed or captured. Thus ended what General Grant justly called "this miserable affair," in which, if success promised results of the first importance, it would be difficult to say that the preparations were of a character to insure success.‡

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* "A part of the colored division was deflected to the right, and charged and captured a portion of the enemy's line, with a stand of colors and some prisoners."—Burnside: Report of the Battle of Petersburg.

† The most destructive fire came from a gun in a work south of the mine, which was covered from the Union batteries by a fringe of trees on their front, that the chief of artillery had required should be felled. "This work having been delayed by the Ninth Corps until the night of the 29th, it was then objected to by General Burnside that the noise of chopping would alarm the enemy."—Hunt: Report of Siege Operations.

‡ The report of the Congressional Investigating Committee finds that the failure of the assault was due to the following causes: 1. The fact that the charge was led by white, instead of black troops. This is stated by the committee to be "the first and great cause of disaster." 2. The fact that General Meade directed that the assaulting column should push at once for the crest of Cemetery Hill, instead of first clearing the enemy's lines to the right and left of the mine. This is a ridiculous charge; for the order to crown the crest involved, in its execution, the clearing of the enemy's lines right and left, as much as an order to General Burnside to pass through a door would presuppose his opening the door.

A very different verdict was, however, pronounced by a military court of inquiry instituted soon after the failure. This court was composed of Generals Hancock, Ayres, and Miles, and its finding is as follows:

"The causes of failure are—

"1. The injudicious formation of the troops in going forward, the movement

IV.

LEE'S DIVERSION.

In the threatening attitude maintained by Grant, there was one move open to Lee that promised, for a time at least, to relieve the pressure on his beleaguered lines. This was to make a diversion in favor of his own army by such a menace against Washington as would compel Grant to part with so much of the Army of the Potomac that offensive operations against Petersburg must cease. This measure was now adopted by Lee.

The execution of this project was facilitated not only by the fact that the position of the Army of the Potomac south of the

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being mainly by flank, instead of extended front. General Meade's order indicated that columns of assault should be employed to take Cemetery Hill, and the proper passages should be prepared for those columns. It is the opinion of the court, that there were no proper columns of assault. The troops should have been formed in the open ground in front of the point of attack, parallel to the line of the enemy's works. The evidence shows that one or more columns might have passed over at and to the left of the crater, without any previous preparation of the ground.

"2. The halting of the troops in the crater, instead of going forward to the crest, when there was no fire of any consequence from the enemy.

"3. No proper employment of engineer officers and working parties, and of materials and tools for their use, in the Ninth Corps.

"4. That some parts of the assaulting columns were not properly led.

"5. The want of a competent common head at the scene of the assault, to direct affairs as occurrences should demand.

"Had not failure ensued from the above causes, and the crest been gained, the success might have been jeoparded by the failure to have prepared in season proper and adequate debouches through the Ninth Corps lines for troops, and especially for field artillery, as ordered by Major-General Meade."—Report on the Conduct of the War, second series, vol. i., p. 215.

Neither of these verdicts, however, reaches the root of the evil. If the reader will study carefully the passage I have quoted from Carnot, in its application to the character of the troops that made the assault, he will have the real cause of the failure. All the rest followed from that primal evil.

James completely uncovered Washington; but the direct line of march by the Shenandoah Valley had been left open to the advance of a hostile force by General Hunter, who, after his defeat before Lynchburg, had taken up an eccentric line of retreat by way of Western Virginia. The effect of this was completely to uncover the frontier of the loyal States.

The force detached by Lee for this expedition consisted of a body of twelve thousand men under General Early. Following the beaten track of invasion, Early marched rapidly down the Shenandoah Valley, arriving before Martinsburg the 3d of July. Sigel, who held post there with a small force, at once retreated across the Potomac at Shepherdstown. General Weber, in command at Harper's Ferry, evacuated the town and retired to Maryland Heights. Hunter, who had made a toilsome march through the Alpine region of Western Virginia, experienced great delays in transporting his troops to Harper's Ferry, owing to the lowness of the river and the breaking of the railroad in several places. He was therefore not in position to check the irruption of the enemy into Maryland, and the Confederates, the way being thus open, passed the Potomac, and marching by way of Hagerstown, on the 7th, reached Frederick—a central point whence they might threaten both Baltimore and Washington.

The only force at hand with which to dispute Early's advance was a body of a few thousand foot artillerists, hundred days' men and invalids under General Wallace, then in command at Baltimore. But on learning the irruption of the enemy across the Potomac, General Grant detached the Sixth Corps from the Army of the Potomac and forwarded it by transports to Washington. It happened, too, at this juncture, that the Nineteenth Corps under General Emory, which had been ordered from New Orleans after the failure of the Red River expedition, had just arrived in Hampton Roads. Without debarking it was sent to follow the Sixth. The advance division of the Sixth Corps under General Ricketts having arrived, General Wallace, with that added to his own heterogeneous force, moved forward to meet Early, and took posi-

tion on the Monocacy. Here he received battle on the 8th, and though he was discomfited, the stand he made gained time that was of infinite value. Wallace fell back on Baltimore, and the route to Washington being clear, Early at once pushed forward in that direction—sending towards Baltimore a cavalry force that destroyed a long stretch of the Northern Central Railroad and burnt the viaduct of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, thus effectually cutting off communication with the North and securing the Confederate rear.

Advancing by the great highway from Frederick to Georgetown, his column on the 9th reached Rockville, fourteen miles from the Federal capital. Bivouacking here, it next day resumed the march, and on the morning of the 11th, Early's van reined up before the fortifications covering the northern approaches to Washington. By afternoon the Confederate infantry had come up, and showed a strong line in front of Fort Stevens. Early had then an opportunity to dash into the city, the works being very slightly defended. The hope at headquarters that the capital could be saved from capture was very slender. But his conduct was feeble, and during the day the Sixth Corps arrived, and was soon followed by the Nineteenth.

After this, no one of sound nerves had any fears for the safety of Washington. The Confederates still held their position during the 12th, and that afternoon warm skirmishing took place, though without vigor on the part of the enemy. A brigade of the Sixth Corps made a sally from the lines and fell upon and drove the enemy for a mile, suffering a loss of near three hundred in killed and wounded, but inflicting heavier damage on the enemy. That night Early withdrew his force and retired across the Potomac at Edward's Ferry, taking with him much booty, but little glory. Next day General Wright began pursuit, but did not overtake the enemy till he reached the Shenandoah Valley. After a smart skirmish at Snicker's Ferry, Early beat a retreat southward. The Sixth Corps was then drawn back to Washington, but as shortly afterwards the Confederates showed signs of repeat-

ing the invasion, it was, with the Nineteenth Corps, returned to the Shenandoah Valley. Here General Sheridan soon afterwards took command, and opened a brilliant campaign, to the details of which I shall shortly return.

In this enterprise, General Lee founded his expectations less on what might be accomplished directly by the expeditionary force, than on the effect he supposed this menace to Washington would have on the army beleaguering Petersburg. He reasoned that as General Grant was a man who believed in overwhelming numbers, he would find himself, after the detachment of a sufficient force to meet the column of invasion, so reduced in strength that he would remove his remaining corps altogether from Petersburg.* The siege would thus be raised and Richmond relieved.

But Lee's reasoning was falsified by the fact. The opportune arrival of the Nineteenth Corps from New Orleans enabled Grant to provide a sufficient force to meet Early by the detachment of a single corps, the loss of which had no sensible influence on operations against Petersburg. There is little doubt that at an earlier period of the war the result would have been very different and would have fully met Lee's expectations. As it was, it required all General Grant's moral firmness to withstand the severe pressure brought upon him by the Administration to remove his army from the James River to the front of Washington. The persistency which has been often pointed out as that commander's distinguishing trait was never so happily illustrated.

* I derive this statement of General Lee's views from Colonel Marshall, of the staff of the Confederate commander.

VI.

SUMMER AND AUTUMN OPERATIONS AGAINST PETERSBURG AND RICHMOND.

Having already set forth the bounds within which manœuvres were practicable for the army before Petersburg, it remains to describe a series of operations within these limits, executed during the remaining months of summer and autumn. They present a remarkable illustration of the vigor and skill that marked both the attack and defence of that city. The recital will bring this narrative up to the close of the campaign of 1864.

THE MOVEMENT TO DEEP BOTTOM.—The first of these operations was a repetition of the manœuvre to the north bank of the James River. The expedition was again under the command of General Hancock, to whom were given, in addition to his own corps, the Tenth Corps (now under General Birney) and the cavalry division of General Gregg. The movement was begun on the 12th of August. As it was not possible long to conceal its real character, it was resolved to throw the enemy off the scent by the embarkation of the expeditionary force on transports at City Point, and the promulgation of the idea that it was about to start for Washington. During the night of the 12th, the fleet steamed up stream, and the troops were next morning landed at Deep Bottom, where General Foster continued to hold an intrenched camp.* Much difficulty was experienced in the debarkation, which

* The artillery had been previously sent across the Appomattox, by way of Point of Rocks, and parked under concealment within General Butler's lines. It was then taken to the north side of the James when the infantry had debarked.

was not completed until nine o'clock of the morning of the 13th—a tardiness not auspicious of a successful result.*

Hancock moved out by the New Market and Malvern Hill roads, encountering little opposition until reaching Bailey's Creek, the point at which his previous advance had been arrested. Here Mott's division fronted the enemy's intrenched line, while Barlow, with two divisions, numbering nearly ten thousand men, was sent to assault on the right, with instructions that, when the position was carried, he should move to his left and uncover Mott's front, when the whole line would advance. The duty assigned to Barlow was of the nature of a detached operation, but he unfortunately tried to keep up his connection with Mott's right, which strung his force out in a thin line, and left him nothing wherewith to form a storming column. Late in the day he made, with a single brigade, an attack that was rather feebly executed,† so that night found the Confederates still in possession of the intrenched line. On General Birney's front, on the other side of Bailey's Creek, some success was gained for the enemy, having weakened that part of the line to oppose Barlow, General Birney was able, with slight loss, to break through a portion of the hostile front, and captured four guns.

Whatever prospect of success originally attended this operation had been based on the fact that the Confederates were weak on the north side of the James—the whole force being believed to be not above eight thousand men.‡ But the design

* It was supposed that Hancock's troops could be readily landed by running the boats along shore, and throwing out gang-planks. But it was found that the boats could not be run near enough to the shore to effect this purpose, and the difficulty was materially increased by the outrunning tide. Moreover, many of the transports were ill-adapted to this use. Throughout all these operations great inconvenience arose from the lack of a few light-draught river steamers.

† The inadequate character of Barlow's attacks General Hancock attributes to "the large number of new men in his command, and the small number of experienced officers."—Report of Operations at Deep Bottom.

‡ "An estimate of General Butler's was furnished me, putting the enemy's strength north of the James at eight thousand five hundred men."—Hancock: Report of Operations at Deep Bottom.

being now fully disclosed, Lee rapidly re-enforced to meet this menace, and success was already very problematical. New dispositions were, however, made on the 14th. On the following day General Birney was directed to find the enemy's left flank and turn it, Gregg's cavalry covering the movement on the right; but he did not conduct his operations sufficiently to the left, and nothing was accomplished that day. On the morning of the 16th, Birney* made a direct attack, with the division of Terry, and succeeded in carrying the line, capturing three colors and two or three hundred prisoners; but the enemy soon rallied and recovered the position.

In connection with Birney's operation, Gregg's mounted division, and an infantry brigade under General Miles, were sent to operate on the Charles City road. Gregg's advance was spirited, and he succeeded in driving the enemy before him for a considerable distance—the Confederate General Chambliss being killed in the skirmish. Fresh forces during the afternoon assailed Gregg, however, who retired, fighting, to Deep Creek, across which he was afterwards driven. In Birney's front the enemy showed so strong a force that a renewal of the attack was deemed impracticable.

During the night of the 16th a fleet of steamers was sent from City Point to Deep Bottom, returning at four A. M. on the following morning—the object being to convey the impression to the enemy that the expeditionary force was withdrawing, and induce him to come out of his works and attack. This *ruse* was not successful.

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* During the night the greater part of General Birney's command was massed in rear of the position occupied by General Barlow. The line from the New Market and Malvern Hill road, at a point designated on the map as the "Potteries," to the extreme right, was held by a thin skirmish line only. One of General Mott's best brigades, under Colonel Craig (One Hundred and Fifth Pennsylvania Volunteers), was sent to General Birney. The remainder of Mott's division was massed in rear of his picket-line, except a small force left at the "Potteries." Gibbon's division (temporarily under Colonel Smythe) was also massed in rear of the skirmish line, and Barlow's division was concentrated near the fork of the Darby and Long Bridge roads.

The four succeeding days passed in unimportant reconnoissances, though on the afternoon of the 18th the Confederates made a sally against a part of Birney's line. After a fight of thirty minutes they were repulsed, with considerable loss. General Miles, with two brigades, participated, attacking the enemy on his left flank. At dark of the 20th, Hancock returned, by way of Bermuda Hundred, to his old camp before Petersburg. The Union loss in this operation exceeded fifteen hundred men.* Much had been expected from it, but the results were trivial.

To the Weldon Railroad.—If the movement to the north side of the James had failed to accomplish the object contemplated, it had at least compelled Lee to detach a considerable force from the lines of Petersburg. Advantage was, accordingly, taken of this fact to strike out on the left flank, which now rested within three miles of the Weldon Railroad. This, as one of the chief lines of communication for the Confederate army, presented a tempting prize.

This operation was intrusted to General Warren, who began its execution on the morning of the 18th, while Hancock remained yet on the north side of the James. No more than slight opposition was encountered on the march, and early in the forenoon, Warren established himself on the railroad. Leaving Griffin's division to guard the point seized, and observe the avenues of approach from the south and west, the advance was continued northward along the railroad. After proceeding a mile towards Petersburg, the enemy was found in line of battle, showing a firm disposition to contest further progress.† In the afternoon, when Warren attempted to renew his advance, with Crawford's division on the right, and Ayres' on the left, the Confederates took the offensive against the latter.

The attack of the enemy came from the left, from the

* Hancock's loss in his own corps was nine hundred and fifteen. In the Tenth Corps and cavalry it is unknown.

† Warren: Report of Operations on the Weldon Railroad.

Vaughan road, the location of which at that point was unknown to the Union officers. It first fell upon the Maryland brigade, which was marching by the flank to cover Ayres' left. The result was that in a few minutes this brigade gave way, thus compelling Ayres' left to fall back, and stopping the advance on the right. About two hundred of the Marylanders were taken prisoners: the remainder retired under cover of the Fifteenth New York Heavy Artillery, which, standing firmly, poured rapid volleys into the enemy, driving him speedily back. This action cost a loss of a thousand men, killed, wounded, and prisoners. But it still left Warren in possession of the prize—the Weldon Railroad. Here he immediately began intrenching a position.

The possession of this line was not to Lee a matter of vital importance, but still of very great importance.* He, therefore, determined at all hazards to dislodge the intruding force.

The body of Confederates met by Warren had not exceeded a division; but Lee immediately strengthened it by powerful re-enforcements, and on the following afternoon (the 19th), made a sudden irruption on the right flank of the Union position. General Warren had directed Brigadier-General Bragg to establish, by means of his brigade, a connection of skirmishers on the shortest line between the right of his corps and the left of the army then resting across the Jerusalem plankroad. This order General Bragg did not execute, but took up another line a mile or more to the rear.† On learning this error, General Warren instructed the brig-

* General Lee, from the time of first reaching Petersburg, never expected to be able long to hold the Weldon Railroad; and four days after his arrival, he sent a warning to the Richmond authorities to prepare to supply his army by the Danville line alone. The reply was, that they hoped he would do all he could to hold the Weldon road. To this he answered, that of course he would do all he could to hold it, but that he had little faith in his ability to do so. The failure of the Confederate authorities to make any provisions in accordance with his admonition was probably the cause of the desperate assaults he made to dislodge Warren.

† Warren: Report of Operations on the Weldon Railroad.

adier to correct it; but before this could be done, the enemy broke through this picket-line with heavy fire in column of fours, left in front. Warren's flank was now turned, and the Confederates, in rear of Crawford's line, swept rapidly down to Warren's left. Great confusion was produced by the men on the front line hastily retiring and masking the fire of those on the second line; so that the whole of Crawford's division was compelled to fall back, as was also the right of Ayres' Twenty-five hundred prisoners fell into the hands of the enemy, and among them General J. Hays, one of Warren's brigade commanders. The troops, however, still clung to their vantage-ground on the railroad.

In the midst of the action, the commands of Wilcox and White of the Ninth Corps (about two thousand in all), opportunely came up; whereupon, Warren, his own lines being reformed, pushed forward and regained the ground lost. The enemy, in great confusion, rapidly fell back to his intrenchments, after a success which, though brilliant in itself, totally failed to accomplish the designed object.

Being satisfied that the position which he held was one that the enemy would make renewed efforts to regain, Warren made dispositions of his lines favorable for artillery defence, and then awaited attack. He was not mistaken in this anticipation; for, on the morning of the 21st, the Confederates opened with some thirty pieces of artillery, crossing their fire at right angles over Warren's position. After an hour's practice of this nature they advanced to attack in front, and at the same time endeavored, with a turning force, to reach the left flank. The attack in front was, however, easily repulsed, and Warren having previously disposed his left flank *en échelon*, the turning force suddenly met a severe fire, under which it fell back in great disorder—five hundred being taken prisoners.* The day's work was a clear

* This turning movement was made by a South Carolina brigade under General Haygood, and the incidents of the attack are thus given by General Warren: "General Haygood's brigade struck a part of our line where the troops were in *échelon;* they found themselves almost surrounded, and every

victory, achieved with trivial loss.* Warren soon rendered his position unassailable, and Lee was compelled to see this important line of supplies cut off. The loss sustained by Warren in these actions for the possession of the Weldon Railroad, reached an aggregate of four thousand four hundred and fifty-five killed, wounded, and missing.†

THE ACTION AT REAMS' STATION.—It will be remembered that at the time Warren moved out, Hancock was operating on the north bank of the James River. Having, meanwhile, returned to the lines before Petersburg on the morning of the 21st, after a very fatiguing march, he was ordered to the left, in rear of the position held by Warren. This was accomplished the same afternoon, and the troops passed the next two days in destroying the Weldon Railroad, moving southward and tearing up the track as far as Reams' Station. The cavalry meanwhile operated on the left towards Dinwiddie Courthouse. From Reams' Station, the troops proceeded, on the 24th, to continue the work of destruction for three miles further southward, after which they were withdrawn to the intrenchments. As Hancock's instructions were to break up the railroad as far as Rowanty Creek, eight miles south of Reams', he once more dispatched part of his corps, on the 25th, to perform this duty. The division to which this work was this day assigned (that of Gibbon), had, however, hardly left its intrenchments when the cavalry, which was thrown out in the direction of any hostile approach, reported the enemy advancing. As the Confederates showed a strong

one, thinking they had surrendered, ceased firing. Troops immediately advanced to bring them in, when their officers commenced firing, and Captain Daly, provost-marshal of the Fourth Division, was shot by General Haygood. In the mixed condition of our men and the enemy, our line could not fire, and many of the enemy escaped."—Warren: Report of Operations on the Weldon Railroad.

* The actual loss was three hundred and two; the enemy's must have been thrice or four times that number, for Warren's men buried two hundred and eleven of the Confederate dead.

† Warren: Report of Operations on the Weldon Railroad.

force of cavalry and infantry, Hancock withdrew Gibbon's division within the intrenchments at Reams' Station, placing it on the left of the First Division, at this time under the command of General Miles. These two small divisions numbered but six thousand men.

The first Confederate attack was made at two P. M. in heavy force, and fell upon Miles' division on the right. This was speedily repulsed. A second and more vigorous assault followed at a brief interval and was likewise repulsed, some of the enemy falling within a few yards of the intrenchments. It should be here observed that the line of breastworks at Reams' Station had been constructed by another corps some time before, and was very faultily located—a fact that made the defence difficult, and materially contributed to the disaster that now befell Hancock.

The repulse of the enemy in the previous charges had been so severe, and attended with so heavy a loss, that there was hesitation in renewing the assault. General A. P Hill, who commanded the Confederate corps on the ground, was, however, resolved to carry the position, and he ordered the division of Heth to do so at all hazards. To cover this attack the Confederates concentrated a powerful artillery fire on the position, and, from the faulty location of the breastwork, it took Hancock's line in reverse, considerably demoralizing his troops. The bombardment was promptly followed by the advance of a storming column, which, by an impetuous rush, succeeded in breaking through Miles' line. Most of the command gave way in confusion, and it was found impossible to repair the break, for the only reserve present was a brigade of Gibbon's division under Colonel Rugg, and this could neither be made to go forward nor to fire.* The Confederates then sprang upon the artillery, and the batteries of McKnight, Perrin, and Sleeper had to be surrendered, after being brilliantly served.

On the occurrence of this disaster, General Hancock ordered

* Hancock: Report of Reams' Station.

forward the division of Gibbon to retake the position and guns. The order was responded to very feebly by the troops, who fell back to their breastwork after receiving a slight fire. By the loss of this part of the line, the remainder of Gibbon's division was exposed to an attack in flank and rear: so that the troops were compelled to occupy the reverse side of the line of intrenchments. The outlook was certainly very critical, and but for the obstinate bravery of Miles' division, and the fine behavior of that officer himself, it had been very ill for the Union force. Miles, however, succeeded in rallying a portion of the Sixty-first New York, and forming it at right angles to the breastwork, arrested the progress of the Confederates, retook McKnight's guns, and recovered a considerable part of the lost line. The behavior of most of the other troops was despicable.

The enemy's dismounted cavalry now made an attack against the left. Though not executed with much vigor, it was resisted with still less by Gibbon's division, which was driven from its breastworks. The Confederates, elated at their easy success, pressed on with loud cheers, when they were met by a heavy flank fire from the dismounted Union cavalry, that, occupying the extreme left, behaved in a manner that contrasted more than favorably with the conduct of most of the infantry. This summarily checked their advance. When, however, the troopers found themselves a second time assailed, and now by infantry, they were unable to maintain their position, and were, therefore, retired to a new line in the rear, where the troops had been rallied.

It is wonderful, and indeed incomprehensible, that the commanding general, informed as he was of Hancock's situation, should not have taken prompt measures for his relief. The distance from Reams' Station to Warren's position was but four miles by a broad, open road, with a telegraph line between the two. Yet the re-enforcements forwarded to Hancock—to wit, Mott's division of his own corps and Wilcox's division of the Ninth corps—were ordered to take up their march by the plankroad, the distance by which was above

double that of the direct and open route along the railroad. Several circumstances occurred to add additional delay to the arrival of these troops; but it is certain that in any event they would not have reached Hancock in time to be of service.*

Thus affairs stood when night fell, and Hancock then withdrew from Reams' Station. It afterwards proved that the Confederates abandoned the field about the same hour. Hancock's loss in this action was twenty-four hundred killed, wounded, and missing, out of his small command of eight thousand infantry and cavalry. Of this number, seventeen hundred were prisoners. The loss on the part of the Confederates is known to have been also very severe; but the precise number is unknown.†

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* The circumstances above referred to as causing delay are thus detailed by Hancock: As soon as I knew that Wilcox's division had been ordered down the plankroad, I dispatched a staff-officer to conduct it up. About 5 o'clock a staff-officer from General Mott reported the arrival of seventeen hundred men of Mott's division at the forks of the road where the Reams' Station road leaves the plankroad. These troops would have been immediately ordered up; but the staff-officer stated that before he could possibly get back with the order Wilcox's division would have passed, so that nothing would be gained. Orders, therefore, were given to Colonel McAllister, commanding the force of Mott's division, to hold well down the plankroad, in anticipation of any attempt of the enemy's cavalry to pass to our rear. An order was also sent to him to arrest all stragglers and form them into regiments. This order, it appears, was handed by the orderly bearing it to General Wilcox, who, not observing the address to Colonel McAllister, opened the order, and thinking it addressed to him, deployed a part of his division to arrest and form the stragglers from the battle-field. How much delay was caused by this error is not known; but it is known that the division, in any event, would not have arrived in time to be of service." —Report of Reams' Station.

† Authority for some of the statements in the above account of the action at Reams' Station, is derived from a letter from General Hancock to the writer, detailing the substance of a conversation had by that officer with the Confederate General Heth, who commanded a division in the battle. I extract the following: "Heth would not say positively how many troops they had at Reams' Station, but acknowledges to a very heavy force of infantry and cavalry. He was surprised at learning the smallness of our force. After they had been repulsed in the third charge upon our works, General Hill sent for Heth and told him that he *must* carry the position, which they certainly did very handsomely by a fourth assault. He admits their losses to have been very severe in killed and wounded."

MOVEMENT BY THE LEFT.—The hold gained by Warren on the Weldon Railroad was permanently retained, and a line of redoubts formed connecting his position with the old left of the army, on the Jerusalem plankroad. No further movement of consequence, beyond reconnoissances, was made till the end of September, when General Grant, being resolved to push operations on Butler's front, north of the James River, directed a demonstration to be made on the left, with the view of preventing the transfer of re-enforcements to the troops opposed to Butler.* For this purpose General Warren, with two divisions of the Fifth Corps, and General Parke, with two divisions of the Ninth, moved from the left towards Poplar Spring Church and Peeble's Farm. Gregg's division of cavalry, at the same time, moved further to the left and rear. One of Warren's divisions, under General Griffin, found the Confederates intrenched on Peeble's Farm, and attacking, carried a redoubt and a line of rifle-pits, taking one gun and about a hundred prisoners. At the same time his other division, under General Ayres, carried a small work on the Squirrel Level road. In the afternoon, Parke, moving on Warren's left, towards the Boydton road, was fiercely assailed, and forced back in disorder. Griffin's division, however, came to his support, and the enemy was then checked and repulsed.

Early next morning, Gregg met the enemy's cavalry and forced it back. At the same time Mott's division of Hancock's corps was withdrawn from the lines and sent to re-enforce Parke; but it did not reach the ground in time to be of service. During the afternoon Gregg was heavily attacked on the Duncan road, where he was guarding the left and rear; but repulsed the enemy, with considerable loss.

The 2d of October the whole force advanced, but found the enemy had withdrawn to his main intrenchments. A position was then taken up, and the necessary works laid out to extend the Federal intrenched line to the position gained.† The loss in this action was above twenty-five hundred.

* Meade: Report of Campaign of 1864. † Meade: Report of Operations.

During these occurrences on the extreme left, General Butler had been operating with the Army of the James against the fortifications of Richmond. Crossing, on the night of the 8th of September, to the north side of the James River, with the corps of Birney and Ord, Butler next morning advanced and carried the very strong fortifications and intrenchments below Chapin's farm, known as Fort Harrison, capturing fifteen pieces of artillery and the New Market road, with the works defending it.* This success was followed up by an assault upon Fort Gilmer, immediately in front of the Chapin's farm fortifications, in which the assailants were repulsed, with a loss of about three hundred men. The position being one very menacing to Richmond, General Butler made dispositions to hold it permanently The Confederates endeavored, in several determined assaults, to dislodge him; but he was able to repulse these attacks, and make the enemy pay dearly therefor.

TURNING MOVEMENT AGAINST PETERSBURG.—It was now approaching the season when, practicable roads and weather being no longer to be counted upon, active operations on a large scale must necessarily be suspended. Before settling down to winter-quarters, however, General Grant determined to strike one vigorous blow for the capture of Petersburg. The plan was to find the extreme right of the enemy s intrenched line, and by turning it, march upon and lay hold of the Southside Railroad, which was Lee's principal communication. The expeditionary force consisted of the major part of the three corps of the army, leaving behind from each only a sufficient force to hold the lines in front of Petersburg.

At this period the left flank of the Union line rested at a point about two miles west of the Weldon Railroad; three miles west of this point one strikes the Boydton plankroad, which runs northeastward into Petersburg. This road, since the loss of the Weldon Railroad, had assumed such import-

* Grant: Report of Operations.

ance to Lee that he had prolonged the right of his intrenched line, covering that road for some distance below the point where it crosses Hatcher's Run. These defences protected, also, the Southside Railroad, which at this point runs parallel with the Boydton plankroad, and two miles distant therefrom.

In the assignment of duty to the respective corps, the Ninth Corps, supported by that of Warren, was to attack vigorously the extreme right of the enemy's intrenched line, while Hancock should cross to the west side of Hatcher's Run, by a swinging movement, gain the Boydton plankroad and advance to seize the Southside Railroad. The execution of this plan was begun early on the morning of the 27th. Proceeding westward two or three miles, the Ninth and Fifth corps, at nine A. M., struck the right of the Confederate intrenched line, which was found to rest on the east bank of Hatcher's Run. The Ninth Corps, under General Parke, was on the right, and Warren's corps on the left. If Parke should carry the position, he was to follow up the enemy closely, turning towards the right. Warren was to support the attack in case of success; but if the Ninth Corps should fail to break the enemy's line, he was to cross Hatcher's Run and endeavor to turn the enemy's right, by recrossing at the first practicable point above the Boydton plankroad. It was very soon found impracticable to force the enemy's position by a direct attack, and Warren then set on foot the turning movement; but before further following events here, it is necessary to detail the operations of the detached column of Hancock, whose part in the plan of action has been above indicated.

Hancock marched by the Vaughan road, which runs westward a considerable distance south of the line on which Parke and Warren were acting. Having forced the crossing of Hatcher's Run, disputed by a small body of the enemy on its west bank, he advanced northwestward, by the way of Dabney's Mill, and gained the Boydton plankroad. Thence he was to proceed to the crossing at White Oak bridge two miles above, and after a further march of four miles strike the

Southside Railroad in rear of the enemy's extreme right. Hancock's left was covered by Gregg's cavalry division. The crossing of Hatcher's Run at Burgess's Mill was found to be observed by merely a small force of the enemy, and wishing to mask his march, he was proceeding to drive it across the run, when, at one P. M., he received orders from General Meade to halt on the Boydton plankroad—an order prompted by the want of success attending General Parke's direct attack.

It has been seen that, on the failure of the Ninth Corps to force the enemy's line in its front, Warren set on foot a turning movement. That officer was directed to send one of his divisions across Hatcher's Run, place its right flank on the run, and then move up its course. It was supposed this measure would serve the double purpose of supporting Hancock's right flank and turning the position in front of the rest of Warren's corps and of the Ninth Corps. When, by a flank attack, the force in front of these corps should be forced to abandon its position, they were also to cross to the west side of Hatcher's Run. The division assigned by Warren to this duty was Crawford's, strengthened by one brigade of Ayres' Crawford crossed Hatcher's Run at Armstrong's Mill, about noon, and proceeded up the stream in the manner indicated. It will now be understood that the order to Hancock to halt on the Boydton plankroad was prompted by the desire that Crawford should move up to his support, and open the way for the forces to the same; for Hancock's position at Burgess's Mill, on the Boydton plankroad, isolated him by five or six miles and by Hatcher's Run from Warren and Parke, and raised fears as to his safety. Circumstances now to be detailed, however, prevented the junction of these forces, and finally ended prematurely an expedition from which the largest results had been hoped.

Crawford's march up the west bank of Hatcher's Run proved to be one of great difficulty, the country being densely wooded and nearly impracticable. Great numbers of the men became lost—in fact, whole regiments losing all idea of where to find the rest of the division. After two or three

hours of toilsome effort, he had advanced so far up the Run as to be directly on the right flank of the intrenched line opposed to the rest of the Fifth Corps and Ninth Corps. This line was, however, on the opposite side of the stream, and before crossing to assail the enemy, General Warren ordered cessation of operations, until he should consult with General Meade, for the country proved to be entirely different from the representations of the imperfect map. From the position where Crawford lay on the west side of Hatcher's Run, to that held by Hancock up this stream, at Burgess's Mill, the distance was not above a mile; but, owing to the difficult nature of the country, it was long before these respective forces found out the location of each other, and in the mean time affairs culminated by an attack of the Confederates on Hancock.

Hancock, on being instructed to halt at Burgess's Mill, was also informed that Crawford's division was feeling its way up the west bank of the Run, and he was desired to assist in making the connection by extending his right. Accordingly, General Egan (then commanding Gibbon's division of Hancock's corps), deployed two of his brigades to the right of the Boydton plankroad, and subsequently deployed two regiments as far as they would reach to the right. It was at one time reported that the connection with Crawford was made; but this report was erroneous, and it was afterwards found that Crawford was full three-fourths of a mile from Hancock's right.

While these occurrences were passing, Lee had resolved to assume the offensive, and fall upon the force west of Hatcher's Run, which, isolated from that on the east side, presented a favorable opportunity for a blow. The force detached to execute this stroke consisted of the greater part of Hill's corps. It appears that it was Lee's original design to cross Hatcher's Run above Burgess's Mill, and attack Hancock's left flank; but as that officer had carried the bridge over the mill-dam before the Confederates were ready for their movement, and as Lee feared the Union force would cross and take the

heights on the opposite side of the stream, the Confederate commander determined to move across Hatcher's Run at once, and assail Hancock's right. Hill accordingly crossed, and, as it happened, his point of passage brought him directly in the interval between Hancock and Crawford. But of this circumstance he was not at all aware, owing to the densely wooded character of the country. The Confederate infantry passed close to Crawford's skirmishers, and followed a path through the woods until they were near Hancock's position, when they deployed, and, about four P M., suddenly fell upon Mott's division of Hancock's corps. Most of the troops were disposed so as to meet an attack from quite a different direction, so that the outburst of the enemy was on their rear, and the presence of the Confederates was first announced by volleys of musketry. Peirce's brigade of Mott's division at this point gave way, one section of artillery was captured, and affairs appeared as critical as can well be conceived. Hancock immediately ordered Egan to change front, and move to resist the adverse mass; but that officer, with true soldierly instinct, had already done that of his own motion, and was moving rapidly to attack the force in his rear. It is probable that the Confederates did not precisely comprehend the situation, for on emerging into the open space around the Boydton plankroad, they pushed rapidly across that road, and, facing southward, commenced firing.

Egan swept down upon the flanks of the enemy with Smythe's and Willett's brigades of his own division, and McAllister's brigade of Mott's division, while De Trobriand's brigade and Kerwin's brigade of dismounted cavalry formed on the west side of the road, and advanced at the same time. The forward rush of Egan's men was irresistible, and the Confederates were driven from the field with the loss of two colors, and nearly a thousand prisoners. The two captured guns were retaken. The enemy made for the woods in confusion, and retired by the same route on which they had advanced. Several hundred of them strayed into Crawford's line, and were taken. An advance of the force under that

officer at this time, must have been decisive of the action, driving the enemy into Hatcher's Run.* No such advance was ordered, however, as it was thought that Ayres' division could reach Hancock more readily than Crawford, there being no known road between these two. Darkness was so near at hand when Ayres moved that he halted for the night at Armstrong's Mill, and consequently did not reach Hancock.†

* "The Confederate General Heth stated that he was greatly alarmed after he had crossed the run to attack us, lest Crawford should advance upon his left flank, and said that had Crawford made such an advance, his (Heth's) command must have been driven into the stream, and dispersed or captured."—Private letter from General Hancock.

† As the above narrative recounts a series of rather complicated events, I add the following from the official report of General Warren: "I ordered Crawford to halt his line and get in good order, and press the enemy with his skirmishers, while I went to consult with General Meade, who, I supposed, was with General Hancock. When near the place of the latter, I was told by Major Riddle that General Meade had returned to Armstrong's Mill, and I proceeded to that point as rapidly as possible. Soon after reaching him we learned that the enemy had come in between Hancock and Crawford, and attacked the former with great violence. The commanding general immediately directed me to send General Crawford to his support, but he assenting to my suggestion that General Ayres could more readily be got there, I directed General Ayres to move at once. Darkness was so near at hand that he was halted at Armstrong's Mill. The attack on General Hancock must have occurred while I was near General Crawford, and yet in the woods the sound of musketry did not reach us. There was besides no road known to us leading directly to General Hancock, and that same woods, for two or three miles, was certain to prevent his arriving for any contemplated emergency. What would have added still greater delay to communicating with General Crawford supervened by the rebels getting in on the road by which we communicated between him and myself. The enemy became so bewildered in these woods that upwards of two hundred of them strayed into General Crawford's line and were captured. Some of these men, before being taken, captured three of our ambulances a mile in the rear of General Crawford. Six of them captured Captain Cope, of my staff; but finding themselves in our lines, gave up to him, and he brought them in. Major Bingham, of General Hancock's staff, on his way to General Crawford, was captured by them, but made his escape; and three officers of my staff, in attempting to avoid the road thus infested by the enemy, became lost in coming from General Crawford's to me, and had to stay out all night in the woods."—Warren: Report of Operations at Hatcher's Run.

Almost simultaneously with this attack, the Confederate cavalry (five brigades under Hampton) assailed Hancock's left and rear, held by Gregg's mounted division. This force was so heavily pressed, that Hancock was obliged to send General Gregg all of his force that he had used in meeting the attack in front. The action was kept up here till some time after dark. Gregg was able to maintain his ground, and the Confederates gained no success.

Hancock's loss in this encounter was fifteen hundred men, which was less than that of the enemy. The action was highly creditable to his skill and the good conduct of the troops. Aside from the praise due to Hancock for the manner in which he had met this sudden attack on his isolated position, nothing can be said in favor of the expedition as a whole. It resulted in total failure, which was partly the result of misfortune, but mainly the result of faults in the original plan. The experience of this operation furnished a fair test of what may be expected from the like dispositions.

After the repulse Hancock had given the force that assailed him, he was reluctant to leave the field that night; but as his troops had nearly exhausted their ammunition, and as there was little prospect that a fresh supply or re-enforcements could reach him in time for an attack in the morning, the withdrawal was begun at ten P M.* This appears to have

* "Between six and seven P. M. I received a dispatch from General Humphreys, stating that Ayres division of the Fifth Corps had been ordered to my support, but had halted at Armstrong's Mill, which was as far as it could be able to get. The dispatch also authorized me to withdraw that night if I thought proper; but stated that if I could attack successfully in the morning, with the aid of Ayres' and Crawford's divisions, the major-general commanding desired me to do so. Though these re-enforcements were offered to me, the question of their getting to me in time, and of getting ammunition up in time to have my own command effective in the morning, was left for me to decide; and I understood that, if the principal part of the fighting in the morning would be thrown upon these re-enforcements, it was not desired that they should be ordered up. They would at least have been called upon to do the fighting until my own command could have replenished their ammunition, which I was quite certain would not be in time to resist attack at an early hour in the morning. Reluctant as I was to leave the field, and by so doing lose some of

been a very fortunate decision, for during the night, the Confederates massed at the position where the fighting ceased fifteen thousand infantry and Hampton's cavalry, with which they had intended to assail Hancock at daylight of the 28th.* Next morning the whole force returned to the lines before Petersburg.

NEW MOVEMENT TO THE LEFT.—From this time forward the operations in front of Petersburg and Richmond, until the spring campaign of 1865, were mainly confined to the defence and extension of the lines, which were pushed westward as far as Hatcher's Run. The extension of the lines was preceded by a new movement to the left, which was very similar, in its general aspects to that above recounted. This operation had the same object as the October movement, which was to turn the enemy's right and seize the Southside Railroad. It was undertaken by the Fifth Corps, the Second Corps, now under General Humphreys,† and Gregg's division of cavalry, and its execution was begun on the 5th of February. For several days preceding that date, a heavy bombardment was kept up from all the batteries before Petersburg, for the purpose of engaging the enemy's attention. The designated troops then moved out—Gregg's division taking the advance by the Jerusalem plankroad to Reams' Station, and masking the movements of the infantry. The plan of operations contemplated that the Second Corps should move directly on the right of the Confederate intrenched line at Hatcher's Run, while the Fifth marched around its right.

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the fruits of my victory, I felt compelled to order a withdrawal rather than risk a disaster by awaiting attack in the morning only partially prepared." —Hancock: Report of Operations on the Boydton Plankroad.

* "The Confederate General Heth stated to me that they remained all night in the position they held when the fighting ceased on the evening of the 27th, and during the night massed fifteen thousand infantry, and Hampton's cavalry, with which they intended to have advanced upon us at daylight of the 28th."—Private Letter from General Hancock.

† General Hancock had some time before been ordered North to raise the new First Corps, and he never returned to his old command.

From Reams' Station the cavalry moved westward, carried the crossing of Rowanty Creek after a brisk skirmish, and marched rapidly on Dinwiddie Courthouse. The Fifth Corps also passed to the west side of the creek and moved on its appointed route. Meantime Humphreys, with the Second and Third divisions of the Second Corps, marched down the Vaughan road to where it crosses Hatcher's Run. The Confederate intrenchments on the opposite bank were not strongly manned; the stream was, however, so obstructed that the cavalry were driven back in an attempt to cross it; but De Trobriand's brigade easily carried the passage with a skirmish line. Before reaching Hatcher's Run, Humphrey's second division under General Smythe was turned abruptly to the right on a path leading northeasterly towards Armstrong's Mill. Advancing about three-fourths of a mile, the enemy was found intrenched in strong force, and nothing was done save to form connection between the two divisions of the Second Corps. In the afternoon the Confederates made a furious assault on Smythe's position, endeavoring to turn his right flank. This attempt was frustrated by the firmness of his troops, aided by McAllister's brigade of Mott's division, which held the extreme right. These maintained their ground with the utmost stubbornness and repulsed repeated attacks that were continued till dark.

Next day the Fifth Corps, which had moved up the west bank of Hatcher's Run, was brought into connection with the Second Corps; and Gregg's cavalry, which had, meanwhile, returned from Dinwiddie, took position to cover the left of the infantry. Warren then threw forward his left, under Crawford, towards the Boydton plankroad. That officer advanced as far as Dabney's, whence he drove a force of Confederates under General Pegram. But the Confederates, having meanwhile found out where the exposed flank of this turning column lay, put in practice the usual and always successful tactics. A considerable force was sent by a detour by the Vaughan road to take Crawford's division in the rear, and cut off his retreat; while at the same time they opened an

attack in front. This flanking force first fell upon Gregg's cavalry, which was driven back to Hatcher's Run. Such a movement on the part of the enemy had been anticipated, and to strengthen Crawford, Ayres' division was ordered up to his support. But, while moving in column, that division was attacked and driven back, and then Crawford's division was repulsed in confusion and with heavy loss. Wheaton's division of the Sixth Corps, which had also been sent forward to re-enforce the left, only arrived in time to take part in the general discomfiture. The line of retreat was towards the position held by the Second Corps on Hatcher's Run. The Confederates, elated with their easy victory, followed up vigorously and dashed out into an open space in front of that corps. Here, however, they were met by a sharp fire from Humphrey's troops, who had intrenched themselves, and the enemy ceasing the attack, hastily retired. The Union loss in these operations was about two thousand, of which the larger part fell on Crawford's division. The Confederate loss is stated to have been near a thousand, and included General John Pegram, who was killed.

The action of the 6th put an end to the contemplated advance towards the Southside Railroad, and the only result gained was to prolong the left of the Union line westward to Hatcher's Run.

Warren's Operations on the Weldon Road.—After the action of February, winter operations were confined to expeditions for the purpose of crippling the Confederate lines of supply. Of these operations, the most important and extensive was that made by General Warren for the complete destruction of the Weldon Railroad. This road, though the Union lines were long ago planted across it, was still of considerable service to the Confederates, who were able to use it up to within a few miles of the Union position, and from the point of stoppage supplies were hauled by wagon. Warren's expedition was to completely break up this line for a distance of twenty-five miles southward. The force consisted of the

Fifth Corps, Mott's division of the Second Corps, and Gregg's mounted division. Setting out on the 7th of December, with four days' rations, the troops moved southward, and that night reached Nottoway. The railroad-bridge over this stream was destroyed by General Gregg. Next day the march was renewed to Jewett's Station, to which point the railroad-track was torn up from the Nottoway The work of destruction was resumed early on the morning of the 9th, by forming line of battle on the railroad, each division destroying all on its front, and then moving to the left alternately. A force of the enemy was encountered, but was driven by Gregg across the Meherrin River. At Hicksford, on the south side of this stream, the Confederates had three forts or batteries, armed with artillery, and connected by rifle-pits, and manned by a considerable body; so that it was impracticable to force a crossing at that point. As the attempt to turn the position would occasion at least two days longer time than that for which the expedition was provisioned, General Warren resolved to return. The railroad destruction was carried over a distance of eighteen or twenty miles, and was very complete. The return was made with the same success. The entire distance travelled was about a hundred miles in the six days. The loss was trivial.

Subsequent occurrences during this period call for no special mention. The army settled itself in winter-quarters to await the season for the opening of the spring campaign.

VII.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE SIEGE OF PETERSBURG.

Regarded as a whole, the operations I have brought together under the designation of the Siege of Petersburg, form a fruitful study. From the extent of time they cover, the energy with which they were prosecuted, and the skilful man-

ner in which they were met by the defending army, they are remarkable in the history of modern warfare.

The characteristic of these operations is the progressive development of the intrenched Union line to the left. Starting from the position directly east of Petersburg taken up by the Army of the Potomac on its first arrival in June, the lines of contravallation were gradually extended south and southwest of the town, till at last they stretched from the Appomattox to Hatcher's Run, a distance of fifteen miles.

This extension was less designed than accidental. It grew out of a series of manœuvres by the left, of which manœuvres the original purpose was in each case to turn the right of the Confederate system of defences, and lay hold of the South-side Railroad. Criticism should, therefore, first be directed to these operations regarded in the light of their original intent, rather than from the point of view of the incidental result arising therefrom.

In their most general relations, these operations are to be looked upon as a swinging movement of the left pivoting on the right. The intrenched lines before Petersburg were strongly held, and on these as a *point d'appui*, it was attempted to throw the left against and around the Confederate right. But these manœuvres had several characteristics that invariably robbed them of the success hoped from them: the pivotal force was generally stronger than the body to which was assigned the turning movement, and by reducing the garrison of his defences to the minimum, Lee was able to accumulate on the menaced point a force sufficient to meet, and almost always to repulse, the body threatening his communications. Moreover, these movements were invariably made in extended lines, which had the inevitable result to expose a flank. This system the enemy soon learnt so well, that his invariable plan was to attack the flank as soon as it was exposed. The region of country southwest of Petersburg in which these operations were conducted was highly favorable to the Confederates, being densely wooded, intersected with swamps, and possessing few roads; and they had a great ad-

vantage in their minute knowledge of the topography of the country, which was nearly terra incognita to the Union commander. The success of the Confederate tactics was wonderful; each movement, saving that to the Weldon Railroad, which was conducted on a different principle, ending in a check, generally accompanied by one or more thousand prisoners. The aggregate of captures made by the enemy in these successive swoops is astonishing. But notwithstanding the many costly proofs received of the fatality attending these unlimited extensions, the type of operation was adhered to with a constancy only accountable on the supposition that the Union commander was enamored of it.

These turning movements, though in each foiled as regards their primal object, always resulted in a further prolongation of the intrenched line to the left. It remains to ask, was this extension of front a real gain? The answer will depend on whether it was a front of offence or defence. If of the latter, it cannot be considered a gain, for in the part assigned the Army of the Potomac it was nothing if not offensive. But beyond the Weldon Railroad the extension to the left carried Grant no nearer Lee's line of communications, the Southside Railroad—in fact, rather away from it, for Lee, by thrusting his right southward along the Boydton plankroad, caused the Union intrenched line to run in the contrary direction to that of the Southside Railroad. It may indeed be said that the prolongation of the Union line caused Lee to extend also, which was, *pari passu*, to weaken himself. But it is doubtful whether the advantage in this process was to the Union side. Lee always took the risk of holding his works with a force greatly inferior to that his antagonist was willing to employ: so that, proportionately, Grant could cut loose no heavier a turning column than with much shorter lines.

In the object General Grant had in view, which was the capture of Petersburg, there would appear to be, theoretically, two modes in which this might have been accomplished. The first is by a system of regular approaches from the points most favorable. These were the site of Fort Sedgwick, and

the position held by Burnside at the time of the mine affair. From these points two saps might have been run, and in the course of a month, with well-led storming columns, there is every likelihood that the Confederate line might have been carried.

The second method is more bold. It is to have abandoned for a time the attempt to hold the long intrenched lines and the connections with the depot at City Point, and moved out the whole army against Lee's railroad communications. This would have compelled him to leave his defences and fight a battle in the open field, or to have evacuated Petersburg and Richmond. The immediate recovery of his railroad communications would have been an absolute necessity to Lee, for so bad was the conduct of the Confederate commissariat and transport system that he was never able to accumulate even one day's supplies ahead—a fact well known to the Union commander. This line of action would have been a realization of that cardinal principle in American warfare which teaches that it should be the aim of the general on the offensive to so threaten the enemy's vital lines as to compel him to fight for their recovery. General Grant's great preponderance in numbers would have made the contingency of his being beaten in such a fight a very remote one. It is true that this plan would not have been without hazard, and would have demanded proportionate skill and vigor in its execution; but if successful, it would have been decisive.

The proposed operation would have resembled the manœuvre by which General Sherman compelled the evacuation of Atlanta. That, also, was not without danger, though it is to be remembered that Sherman's opponent was infinitely inferior to the commander of the Army of Northern Virginia.

VIII.

SHERIDAN'S OPERATIONS IN THE VALLEY.

Before proceeding to recount the history of the final campaign of the Army of the Potomac, it will be necessary to describe briefly the summer and autumn operations in the Shenandoah Valley, as they have an important bearing on the events that are to follow.

In the relative situations of the contending armies in Virginia, the operations in the Shenandoah Valley had always exercised a powerful influence on the main current of action. From the peculiar geographical relations of that Valley in a military point of view, it was always open to a detached force to make incursions across the frontier of the loyal States, whether for the purpose of plunder or of a diversion in favor of the main Confederate army, by a menace against Washington. At the same time, the line of the Blue Ridge perfectly covered its communications with Richmond and Lee's army. From this circumstance, the Confederates had always been able, with astonishingly small bodies of cavalry and infantry, to retain a powerful Federal force for the protection of the frontier of Maryland and Pennsylvania. In several critical situations the Shenandoah column had, by vigorous demonstrations, paralyzed the Army of the Potomac, by calling away therefrom so considerable a force as to compel a surcease of operations on the main line.

Relying on the oft-proved effect of such threats, Lee, as soon as he found himself under beleaguerment at Petersburg, had detached the column of Early to menace the Federal capital. It has already been seen that the result did not correspond with his wishes; for Grant, parting only with a sufficiency of force to protect Washington, continued to hold Lee with an unrelaxing grip.

But although the direct object of the Confederate menace had failed, it nevertheless met so considerable a measure of success that even after Early had retired to the Valley of the Shenandoah, he was there able to take up so threatening an attitude that it was found impossible to return the Sixth and Nineteenth corps to the Army of the Potomac. No sooner was this attempted, than Early was again across the border—his cavalry penetrating Pennsylvania as far as the town of Chambersburg, which they laid in ashes. Upon this, the Sixth Corps, which had been retired to Washington *en route* for the James, was returned to Harper's Ferry, to unite with the Nineteenth Corps and the Federal forces of West Virginia in an effort to clear the Valley of the Shenandoah.

The distribution of the Union force in the region of Northern and West Virginia, and along the frontier of the loyal States, was at this time as little conformable to military principles as it had been in the worst period of 1862. Washington and Baltimore, and the country adjacent, formed the Department of Washington; Eastern and Central Pennsylvania and Northern Maryland, the Department of the Susquehanna; Northwestern Virginia and Western Pennsylvania, the Department of West Virginia; and the region of the Shenandoah, and eastward to the Bull Run Mountains, the Middle Department. These several military bailiwicks were under control of independent military commanders, whose petty jealousies and want of harmony of action enabled the Confederates, with a force ridiculously inferior, to pluck at any time cheap laurels.

Happily the conduct of the war was now under one military head, so that General Grant could at will end this costly and disgraceful policy. The events of July showed the urgent need of unity of command in Northern Virginia, and the lieutenant-general, in August, consolidated these four departments into one, named the Middle Military Division, under General Hunter. That officer, however, before entering on the proposed campaign, expressed a willingness to be relieved, and General P. H. Sheridan, who had been transferred

from the Army of the Potomac to the command of the forces in the field under Hunter, was appointed in his stead. The selection was a fortunate one. An excellent strategist, of sound military views, and a wary, enterprising, and aggressive temper, General Sheridan was of all others the man best fitted for the peculiar command intrusted to him. To the column of active operation under his command, consisting of the Sixth and Nineteenth corps and the infantry and cavalry of West Virginia, under Generals Crook and Averill, were added two divisions of cavalry from the Army of the Potomac, under Torbert and Wilson. This gave him an effective in the field of forty thousand men, whereof ten thousand consisted of excellent cavalry—an arm for the use of which the Shenandoah region affords a fine field.

General Sheridan was appointed to the command on the 7th of August, and his operations during that month and the fore part of September were mainly confined to manœuvres having for their object to prevent the Confederates from gaining the rich harvests of the Shenandoah Valley. But after once or twice driving Early southward to Strasburg, he each time returned on his path towards Harper's Ferry. General Grant had hesitated in allowing Sheridan to take a real initiative, as defeat would lay open to the enemy the States of Maryland and Pennsylvania before another army could be interposed to check him. Finding, however, while on a personal visit to General Sheridan, in the month of September, that that officer expressed great confidence of success, he authorized him to attack.

At this time the Confederate force held the west bank of Opequan Creek, covering Winchester; and the Union force lay in front of Berryville, twenty miles south of Harper's Ferry. The situation of the opposing armies was peculiar: each threatened the communications of the other, and either could bring on a battle at any time.

It would appear that General Early had designed assuming the offensive; for, leaving one division of infantry and Fitz Hugh Lee's cavalry to cover Winchester, he had thrown the

bulk of his army well forward by his left to Bunker Hill, twelve miles north of Winchester. From this point he, on the 18th, advanced a reconnoitring force as far as Martinsburg, twelve miles further to the north. Sheridan, whose position at Berryville was twelve miles east of Winchester, being well content with his antagonist's manœuvre, advanced towards Winchester early on the morning of the 19th, expecting to catch his opponent in *flagrante delicto*.

Wilson's cavalry division, having the advance on the Winchester and Berryville turnpike, at dawn carried the Confederate intrenched skirmish line on the west bank of the Opequan. This stream runs northward at a distance of four miles east of Winchester. The way being thus opened, the infantry column, the Sixth Corps in the van, crossed at the ford and took position within two miles of Winchester. The direction of Sheridan's advance brought his attack full upon Early's isolated right, which, but for a vexatious delay, might readily have been overwhelmed, while the main Confederate force was still ten miles off at Bunker Hill. This delay, which consumed two hours in the march of the Nineteenth Corps, was caused by the obstruction of the Winchester and Berryville turnpike by the wagon-trains of the Sixth Corps and of Wilson's cavalry division. This delay, which was much regretted by Gen. Emory, enabled Early to hurry his force southward from Bunker Hill in time to meet the attack. Sheridan formed his line of battle with the Sixth Corps on the left, covered on that flank by Wilson's cavalry division, the Nineteenth Corps in the centre, and the Kanawha infantry on the right. The latter flank was covered by Merritt's division of cavalry. Averill's division of cavalry, which had pressed down on the retreating Confederates from the direction of Bunker Hill, succeeded in closing in on the Union right. This, therefore, brought two powerful divisions of horse on the right of the Federal line, which had a development of about four miles, enveloping Winchester from the north and east. Early's left rested on a series of detached and fortified hills to the northwest of the town. It is due tc

state that there was a great disparity in the numbers engaged —Early's force consisting of eight thousand five hundred muskets and three thousand sabres,* while Sheridan's strength was thrice that of the aggregate Confederate force.

Sheridan's preponderance in horse enabled him to extend far beyond and overlap the Confederate left, and when, after several hours of indecisive fighting between the infantry, a general advance was, at four P. M., made by the whole line, the cavalry, by an impetuous charge, carried the fortified heights: the Confederates, pressed heavily in front by the infantry, and on the right by Wilson's cavalry, broke in confusion, retiring from the field and through Winchester, with the Union forces in pursuit. Night, however, prevented Sheridan from following up the victory, among the trophies of which were two thousand five hundred prisoners, five pieces of artillery, and nine battle-flags. Among the Confederate officers killed were Generals Rodes and Godwin. The Union loss was also severe, and included that intrepid soldier, General D. A. Russell (commanding a division of the Sixth Corps), who was killed.

After his defeat at Winchester, Early did not pause in his southward retreat till he reached Fisher's Hill, near Strasburg, thirty miles south of Winchester. This is a very defensible position, commanding the *débouché* of the narrow Strasburg valley between the north fork of the Shenandoah River and the North Mountain. On these obstacles Early rested

* The authority for this statement of the Confederate force, is a letter written by General Early from Havana, and published in December, 1865. In this letter that officer says: "At the battle of Winchester, or Opequan, as it is called by General Grant, my effective strength was about eight thousand five hundred muskets, three battalions of artillery, and less than three thousand cavalry."

The Confederate cavalry of the Valley, consisting of two divisions under Fitz Hugh Lee and Lomax, was at this time in a miserable condition, materially and morally. "Our horses," says a letter from a Confederate officer of this force, "had been fed on nothing but hay for some time, and were quite weak; and want of discipline had greatly demoralized the men."

his flank. In front of this position Sheridan arrived on the morning of the 22d, and formed his force for a direct attack, while he sent Torbert with two divisions of cavalry by the parallel Luray valley, to gain New Market, twenty miles in Early's rear. After much manœuvring, and several ineffectual efforts to force the position, an attack of cavalry was made from the right. Under cover of this mask a corps of infantry was moved to that flank, and by an impetuous assault carried the Confederate left resting on the North Mountain. A general attack in front then disrupted Early's whole line, and the Confederates retired in great disorder, leaving behind sixteen pieces of artillery and several hundred prisoners.

The success at Fisher's Hill was greatly influenced by the fact that at the time the attack was made, Early was about retiring from the position, owing to his fears of an irruption on his line of communications by the Union cavalry column moving through Luray valley. This fear was, however, groundless; for this powerful body was held in check all day by a much inferior force of Confederate cavalry at Milford.*

Early's retreat was not stayed until he reached the lower passes of the Blue Ridge, whither he retired with a loss of half his army. Sheridan, after pushing the pursuit as far as Staunton, and operating destructively against the Virginia Central Railroad, returned and took position behind Cedar Creek near Strasburg. Previously to abandoning the country

* The defence at this point was made by a small division of Confederate cavalry under General Wickham, and an officer of that command thus writes concerning the affair of the 22d:

"At Milford, with such fortifications as we could throw up, we fought all day Thursday (the 22d). At one time Torbert flanked us with three regiments. We did not allow this to stampede us like the army at Fisher's Hill; but Colonel Mumford, withdrawing several squadrons from the centre under a galling fire, went over to the right, and by resorting to a little strategy, repulsed the flanking column and restored our lines. At night Torbert retired, declaring that our position was impregnable. Some idea can be formed of the value of this victory when it is known that, had we run off, it would have let Torbert into Newmarket twelve hours before Early could have gotten back there with his army. This must have resulted in the annihilation of the latter beyond a possibility of a doubt."

south of Strasburg, it was laid waste by the destruction of all barns, grain, forage, farming implements, and mills. The desolation of the Palatinate by Turenne was not more complete.*

On the withdrawal of Sheridan, Early, after a brief respite, and being re-enforced by Kershaw's division of infantry and six hundred cavalry from Lee's army, again marched northward down the Valley, and once more ensconced himself at Fisher's Hill. Sheridan continued to hold position on the north bank of Cedar Creek. Nothing more important than cavalry combats, mostly favorable to the Federal arms, took place, until the 19th of October, when Early assumed a bold offensive that was near giving him a victory as complete as the defeat he had suffered.

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* General Sheridan's dispatch reciting the destruction of the Shenandoah Valley is in the following words: "In moving back to this point, the whole country, from the Blue Ridge to the North Mountain, has been made entirely untenable for a rebel army. I have destroyed over two thousand barns filled with wheat and hay and farming implements; over seventy mills filled with flour and wheat; have driven in front of the army over four thousand head of stock, and have killed and issued to the troops not less than three thousand sheep. This destruction embraces the Luray valley and the Little Fort valley, as well as the main valley." This dread bulletin recites acts some of which are indefensible. The destruction of the crops, provision, and forage was allowable; for this deprived the enemy of immediate subsistence, and operated to the end to induce him to surrender. But the burning of the mills and farming implements cannot be justified, for that was to inflict vengeance upon the country for many years to come. It may indeed be said that the desolation of the Shenandoah Valley was a special measure designed to cover the frontier of the loyal States from invasion; but this, though plausible, is not a sufficient reason. I have cited above the destruction of the Palatinate, and the case is quite in point, both in respect to the act itself and the verdict history will pronounce thereon. "When," says a legal writer of the highest authority, "the French armies desolated with fire and sword the Palatinate in 1674, and again in 1689, there was a general outcry throughout Europe against such a mode of carrying on war; and when the French minister Louvois alleged that the object in view was to cover the French frontier against the invasion of the enemy, the advantage which France derived from the act was universally held to be inadequate to the suffering inflicted, and the act itself to be therefore unjustifiable."—Twiss: Law of Nations, vol. i., p. 125. See also Vattel, L. iii., c. 9, § 166.

At this time the Union force was stationed as follows: the infantry line ran along the east bank of Cedar Creek behind intrenchments drawn on rising and rolling ground—Crook's (Eighth) corps on the left; Emory's (Nineteenth) in the centre, and the Sixth Corps, for the time under Ricketts, on the right. The latter corps was posted somewhat in rear and in reserve. The cavalry divisions of Custer and Merritt guarded the right flank; that of Averill (at this time under Powell) guarded the left, and picketed the whole line of the North Fork of the Shenandoah from Cedar Creek to Front Royal. The army was, at this time, temporarily under the command of General Wright—Sheridan being absent at Washington.

The position held by the Union force was too formidable to invite open attack, and Early's only opportunity was to make a surprise. This that officer now determined on, and its execution was begun during the night of the 18–19th October. Soon after midnight, Early, having made his dispositions at Fisher's Hill, moved forward in demonstrations against the Union right, whence the sounds of musketry announced a fight on the picket-line. But this was merely a feint—the real attack was to fall on the left. One column was marched southeasterly from Strasburg, a short distance along the Manassas Gap Railroad, so as to pass beyond the furthest development of the Union left flank, while another massed silently behind the picket-line for a direct attack. The flanking column then turned northerly on a path that crosses the North Fork of the Shenandoah, by a ford about a mile to the east of the junction of Cedar Creek with that stream. Before dawn it was across the ford, and being favored by a heavy fog, had attained, unperceived, the rear of the left flank of the Union force, formed by Crook's corps. This position gained, the Confederates closed in upon and captured the Union pickets, and rushed into the camp—the troops awaking only to find themselves prisoners. To rally the men in their bewilderment was impossible, and Crook's corps, being thoroughly broken up, fled in disorder, leaving many guns in the hands of the enemy.

As soon as this flank attack was developed, Early, with his other column, emerged from behind the hills west of Cedar Creek, and crossing that stream, struck directly the troops on the right of Crook. This served to complete the disaster, and the whole Union left and centre became a confused mass, against which the Confederates directed the captured artillery (eighteen guns), while the flanking force swept forward to the main turnpike.

Such was the scene on which the light of day dawned. The only force not yet involved in the enemy's onset was the Sixth Corps, which by its position was somewhat in rear. With this General Ricketts quickly executed a change of front, throwing it forward at right angles to its former position, and firmly withstood the enemy's shock. Its chief service was, however, to cover the general retreat which Wright now ordered, as the only practicable means of reuniting his force. This was executed with such order as might be under the circumstances, and as the enemy pressed the left most vigorously, wedging in as though in the endeavor to cut off the Union force from its line of retreat to Winchester, the cavalry divisions of Merritt and Custer were transferred to that flank. At length, when Middletown, the first village north of Strasburg and about five miles from that place, was reached, line of battle was formed and a stand made to dispute the further advance of the enemy. But it was obvious that there was still too little cohesion in the mass, and as the Confederates threatened to overlap the left flank, the Union line again fell back, and the enemy gained Middletown. Now, however, the pursuit began to lose its vigor, and, at the first good position between Middletown and Newtown, Wright was able to rally and reform the troops, form a compact line, and prepare either to resist further attack or himself resume the offensive.

It was at this time, about half-past ten A. M., that General Sheridan arrived upon the field from Winchester, where he had slept the previous night. Hearing the distant sounds of battle rolling up from the south, Sheridan rode post to the front, where arriving, his electric manner had on the troops a very

inspiriting effect.* General Wright had already brought order out of confusion and made dispositions for attack. These were left unchanged by Sheridan, except that Custer's cavalry division was transferred to its place on the right flank. A counter-charge was begun at three o'clock in the afternoon. Notwithstanding the success of the morning, or rather by reason of that success conjoined with bad discipline, the Confederates were at this time in a very unfit moral condition to resist attack, for a large part of Early's force, in the intoxication of success, had abandoned their colors and taken to plundering the abandoned Federal camps.† The refluent wave was as resistless as the Confederate surge had been; the enemy was driven out of Middletown and beyond, and pressed upon back to Cedar Creek. The retreat soon became a rout, in which the Confederates abandoned much material. The Union infantry halted within their old camps; but the cavalry, forcing the passage of Cedar Creek, hung on the flanks and rear of the enemy and followed beyond Strasburg till night put an end to the pursuit. Early succeeded in halting his force for the night at Fisher's Hill, and next morning continued his retreat southward. In the pursuit all the captured guns were

* The dramatic incidents attending the arrival of Sheridan have perhaps caused General Wright to receive less credit than he really deserves. The disaster was over by the time Sheridan arrived; a compact line of battle was formed, and Wright was on the point of opening the offensive. Wright certainly had not the style of doing things possessed by Sheridan, but no one who knows the steady qualities of that officer's mind can doubt that he would have himself retrieved whatever his troops had lost of honor.

† General Early, in an address made to his army subsequent to this action, held the following language: "Had you remained steadfast to your duty and your colors, the victory would have been one of the most brilliant and decisive of the war. But many of you, including some commissioned officers, yielding to a disgraceful propensity for plunder, deserted your colors to appropriate to yourselves the abandoned property of the enemy; and subsequently, those who had previously remained at their posts, seeing their ranks thinned by the absence of the plunderers, when the enemy, late in the afternoon, with his shattered columns, made but a feeble effort to retrieve the fortunes of the day yielded to a needless panic, and fled the field in confusion, thereby converting a splendid victory into a disaster."

retaken and twenty-three in addition. The captures included, besides, near fifteen hundred prisoners, which fully made up for those lost by the Union force in the morning.

With this defeat of Early, all operations of moment in the Valley of the Shenandoah forever ended. The complete destruction of forage in this region rendered it impossible for the Confederates to sustain there any considerable body of cavalry. The prestige won by Sheridan enabled General Grant to recall the Sixth Corps to the Army of the Potomac, and to take away two of Sheridan's mounted divisions. Soon afterwards most of Early's infantry returned to rejoin the main Confederate force at Petersburg.

In this stirring campaign of two months' duration, Sheridan's operations, characterized by great vigor, were crowned with complete success. It is indeed to be borne in mind that the credit awarded to warlike exploits is to be measured by the obstacles overcome, and that Sheridan certainly had a very great preponderance of force. Nevertheless, the cleanness with which the work was done, the energy of the execution, the completeness of the solution of a long-time vexatious problem, are all very admirable. Sheridan's operations were characterized not so much, as has been supposed, by any originality of method, as by a just appreciation of the proper manner of combining the two arms of infantry and cavalry. He constantly used his powerful body of horse, which under his disciplined hand attained a high degree of perfection, as an impenetrable mask behind which he screened the execution of manœuvres of infantry columns hurled with a weighty momentum on one of the enemy's flanks.

XIII.

THE FINAL CAMPAIGN.

MARCH—APRIL 9, 1865.

I.

THE CIRCLE OF THE HUNT.

THE time has now come when it is no longer possible to consider the Army of the Potomac apart from that colossal combination of force that, pressing from all sides on the structure of the Confederacy, finally bore it to the ground.

That this army cannot rightly be viewed independently of the co-operative forces throughout the general theatre of war, is made apparent by the single fact that during the winter months succeeding the close of the campaign of 1864, so far from its being any longer a desirable object to capture Petersburg and Richmond, Grant's efforts were mainly directed to restraining the Confederates from voluntarily giving up to him those strongholds that, having been for four years the prize so eagerly coveted, were now the possession most of all to be shunned. How this was and must have been so, will become manifest from a brief glance at the relations which the gigantic vigor of Sherman had established between his own army and the opposing forces in Virginia.

The communications on which Lee's army depended, not only for the maintenance of its interior lines with the remaining forces of the Confederacy in the Southwest, but for its supplies of food and ammunition, ran through the Carolinas

and the seaboard States and radiated over the great productive territory of the central zone.

By the capture of Atlanta, gained in the midsummer of 1864, Sherman grasped one of the main ganglia of the Southern railroad system. This was a loss terrible indeed to the Confederates, and narrowing the sphere of their activity and their means of intercommunication, yet not so deadly but that they might still, by the judicious use of such force as they had, oppose a menacing front and greatly prolong the war.

But whatever opportunity was then afforded the Confederates of thus acting, was thrown away, with that species of madness with which the gods are said to inspire those whom they would destroy, when Hood, at this time in command of the Confederate army of the West, quitting his proper defensive, was directed to make his ill-judged and disastrous aggressive movement into Tennessee. What would have been a thorn in the side of an inferior man, was to Sherman an opportunity, and with one of those inspirations such as are possible only to military minds of the first order, he determined to offer a counter to Hood's initiative by laying hold of and advancing along those interior lines voluntarily abandoned to him by his antagonist. Sherman's march assumes the aspect of a great swinging movement, the pivot of which was the army before Petersburg. But it was a swinging movement described on a radius of half a continent—one of those colossal enterprises whereof there are few examples in military history, and which fill up the measure of the imagination with the shapes of all that is vast and grandiose in war.

From Atlanta Sherman advanced, destroying the Southern railroads, foundries, mills, workshops, and warehouses, to Savannah on the sea. That city was reached the 21st of December, after a march of above three hundred miles, in four-and-twenty days. It was now open to General Grant to unite Sherman's army with the army before Petersburg either by water or by an advance of Sherman through the seaboard States. The latter course was determined on as the more decisive in its character, and its execution begun on the 1st

of February, 1865, when Sherman crossed the Savannah into South Carolina.

When Hood's crushing defeat by Thomas before Nashville had made an end of the campaign that Mr. Davis had projected as the means of throwing Sherman back out of Georgia in a "Moscow retreat," and when it was seen that Sherman, heading his columns northward towards Virginia, approached like an irresistible fate, sweeping a wide swathe of desolation through the centre of the South, the Richmond authorities, awaking to a sense of their fatal folly and goaded by the clamors of an alarmed and frenzied people, sought a measure of amelioration for the shattered fortunes of the Confederacy by the reappointment of General Johnston to the command of the forces opposing Sherman.

But it was already too late. Johnston did all he could; and all he did was judicious: but he could only stay for a time a result seen to be inevitable. Withdrawing the garrisons of the seaboard cities, and uniting thereto the corps lately under Beauregard and the remnants of Hood's army, which with much address he succeeded in bringing to a junction with the troops confronting Sherman, he prepared to oppose such a resistance as was possible to the onward march of his formidable antagonist. Johnston had on paper a numerous army; but, in effect, it was not, all told, above twenty thousand strong; while the troops were in such condition of *morale* as may be imagined of men who had already been driven through two States into the forests of North Carolina. In this state of facts it was vain for Johnston to attempt an aggressive policy, unless indeed he should find an opportunity of striking a blow at a detached fragment. But his antagonist carried too much art into his dispositions of his columns of march to present such an opening, and the one stroke at Bentonville (a partial and unimportant success), was all the offensive essayed by Johnston.

The Confederate commander was, moreover, in a trying dilemma: in order to keep open the Danville line, by which a junction of the forces of Lee and Johnston might be made, it

was necessary for him to constantly refuse his left and manœuvre by his right. But this was to uncover the path by which Sherman might advance to unite with Grant. As this result, however, could not long be prevented, Johnston chose the former course and fell back in the direction of Raleigh, which was a judicious measure, since a junction of the two Confederate armies was now the governing desideratum. Pressing forward his advance, Sherman, the 23d of March, reached Goldsborough, North Carolina, where he united with the Federal columns that had moved out from Newbern and Wilmington. His course to Petersburg was then clear—the distance a hundred and fifty miles in a northerly direction. No immediate start, however, was made from Goldsborough, as well for the reason that his army had to be refitted as that General Grant feared if Sherman should then move any further on his way, Lee would abandon Petersburg and Richmond. This, as I have already intimated, was the thing now least desired, for the conditions were not such as to permit of an effective pursuit, and Grant, like Phocion, desired to have an army fitted for a long race—a race, the goal of which was the destruction of his adversary.

While from the direction of the south Sherman thus drew from the mountains to the sea a wall of bayonets that imprisoned the enemy between himself and the Army of the Potomac, Grant directed Sheridan to make a new raid, with a view to severing all the remaining communications of the Confederates—a necessary step in that plan of encircling and enclosing Lee which the lieutenant-general had devised as the preliminary to his premeditated blow.

Moving from Winchester the 27th of February, Sheridan galloped up the Valley of Virginia. With his superb column of ten thousand sabres, he little recked of any enemy he was likely to encounter. Early, indeed, still hovered about the Valley that had been so fatal to him; but what of force remained with him was but the shreds and patches of an army, numbering, perhaps, twenty-five hundred men. Foiling by his

rapid advance an attempt to destroy the bridge over the Middle Fork of the Shenandoah at Mount Crawford, Sheridan entered Staunton the 2d of March and then moved to Waynesboro, where Early had taken position to dispute the *débouché* of the Blue Ridge. Charging upon this scratch of an army without taking the trouble of making a reconnoissance even, Sheridan broke it in pieces, capturing two-thirds of it, with most of its artillery trains and colors. Then, defiling by the passes of the Blue Ridge, he struck Charlottesville, where he remained two days, destroying the railroad towards Richmond and Lynchburg, including the two large bridges over the north and south forks of the Rivanna River. He had now moved so far away that it was necessary for him to await the arrival of his trains.

Sheridan's instructions prescribed that he should gain Lynchburg on the south bank of the James. From that point he was to effectually break up those main branches of Lee's communications, the Lynchburg Railroad and James River Canal, after which he was to strike southward through Virginia to the Westward of Danville and join Sherman. But while awaiting at Charlottesville the arrival of his trains, the James River became so swollen by heavy rains as to be impassable. Nowise disconcerted by this untoward fortune, but with an admirable fertility of resource, he determined to abandon the purpose of capturing Lynchburg, and in the mean time to operate against the canal, and then, if possible, effect a crossing of the James between Lynchburg and Richmond. The former design was very completely carried out, but he was unable to pass the James, as the Confederates destroyed all the bridges.

Thus cabined and confined, there was for Sheridan but one alternative, either to go back whence he had come, or strike a base at White House and thence effect a junction with the army before Petersburg. With characteristic daring he adopted the latter course, and this resolve, though it baulked Grant's original intent, led to a result every way better.

After completing the destruction of the canal, he concentrated his whole force at Columbia, and thence rounding the left of Lee's army, and putting the Pamunkey between him and the Confederate force, Sheridan proceeded towards the York, breaking up *en route* all the railroad tracks and bridges. The 19th of March he reached White House, whither an infantry force and supplies had been forwarded to him. After resting and refitting here, Sheridan, on the 24th, moved across the Peninsula to James River, and passing to the south bank at Jones' Landing, he, two days afterwards, joined the army before Petersburg.

The circle of the hunt was now complete. The leashed dogs of war lay ready for the spring, whenever the meditative soldier who sat silent in his wooden hut at City Point should sound the "*laissez aller*."

That the campaign about to be opened could have but one result—to wit, the destruction of the Confederate armies—was not now doubtful; and discerning men at the South plainly read the omens of doom. It was not alone that an overwhelming weight of physical power, represented by a million men in arms, threatened to overwhelm the insurgent armies, or that the great extent of territory overrun by the Union forces had torn asunder the fabric of the Confederacy; but secret causes of disturbance in the moral order had corrupted the life-blood of the revolt. It is such metaphysical influences that govern the issues of war—influences little understood by the superficial annalists who attempt to explain by material causes the secrets of an art so vast, subtle, and complex as to be almost beyond the reach of man's mind—influences, whose sovereign power was marked by the greatest of commanders in the aphorism, that in war the moral is to the physical as three to one.

When in a revolution the time arrives that the people separate themselves from the cause of their leaders, that cause speedily falls to the ground. This was the pass to which the Confederate States had come. It was not precisely that the

people of the South had ceased to desire the triumph of secession; but they had ceased any longer to be capable of those efforts failing which success is out of the question. It will be for the philosophical historian, unravelling the intricate web of cause and effect, to trace the reasons of this decline in the moral energy of the South: it is enough here to mark the result as it influenced the fortunes of the armies in the field.

General Grant, during the winter of 1864, expressed in a strong figure the belief that the fighting population of the Confederacy was exhausted. "They have," said he, "robbed the cradle and the grave." But this statement overshot the reality. The South did not so much lack men as the men lacked interest in the war. The conscription then became odious, and evasion universal, while those who wished to escape military service readily found those at home willing to open their ranks, let them slip through, and close up behind them. It finally came about that men enough to form three armies of the strength of Lee's lay *perdu*, beyond the power of recovery of the Richmond authorities. To this must be added the fact that a prodigious number of Confederate troops —probably as many as were in the ranks of both Lee and Johnston—were, during the last eighteen months of the war, kept out of the field by being retained as prisoners at the North under a fixed determination of General Grant not to exchange them—a measure that was certainly an effectual agency in the lieutenant-general's avowed plan of "hammering continuously against the armed force of the enemy and his resources until by mere attrition, if by no other way, there should be nothing left to him."

While the conscription system had thus hopelessly broken down, the collapse of the Confederate commissariat was equally complete. And here, again, it was not that the South lacked resources, for the granaries of that vast and fertile territory bulged with great store of corn; but mal-administration rendered these riches as vain as if the South had been a Sahara. That great department of administrative service charged with the feeding of the troops, was presided over by

a man of such notorious ignorance and incompetence, that authentic records show the armies in the field to have been half the time bordering on starvation. The daily ration for the army defending Petersburg, during all the last winter of the war, was a pound of flour and a quarter of a pound of meat. But even this so frequently failed that it was only the prodigious vigor of Lee that enabled the troops in the trenches to receive even that meagre dole of food.*

If the moral spring of the insurrection had become thus relaxed, it is not wonderful that the armies also had sunk in energy. The glory of arms at length ceased to support men against sufferings, privations, and fatigues that, while hard to bear in themselves, were unmitigated by any hope of a successful issue. The consequence of this was soon seen in such an increase of desertion that the two main armies of the Confederacy showed four men on their rolls to one in the ranks. At the opening of the spring campaign, General Lee had, on

* General Johnston, soon after the close of the war, stated to me that he regarded these two causes—the condition of the Confederate commissariat and the abuses of the conscription system—as amply adequate to account for the failure of the South. I shall here record a few of his pregnant observations on both these subjects. "In regard to the raising of troops," said he, "that was done in the worst possible manner—namely, by *conscription*, by the Confederate government. Instead of determining the number of troops wanted, and apportioning to each State its proper quota, wholesale impressments were made by the machinery of a central government. Each State had its own officers with which it could have raised the troops; and being of the localities, they, of course, knew every man and boy in the place, and avoidance or evasion would have been difficult. But by the system adopted, this perfect agency was not called into play at all. Finally, it resulted that it required as many men to enforce the conscription as it was expected to raise by its operation. Then ensued evasion: those who wished to shrink service, or aid others to do so, opened their ranks, allowed them to slip through and close up behind. Supplies, also, instead of being honestly raised, were impressed by a band of commissaries and quartermasters, who only paid one-half the market value. As might have been expected, this was enough to prevent their getting any thing. These they took by force, and did it with the greatest injustice. You can imagine what disorganization of labor and what discontent this produced. The mismanagement of the Confederate executive in these two regards was enough to ruin the cause."

paper, one hundred and sixty thousand men, but in reality less than fifty thousand, from which, if there be deducted the troops on detached duty, it will appear that he had forty thousand men with which to defend forty miles of intrenchments.

These were the forlorn hope of the rebellion. Corralled between the two great Union armies, in the restricted space between the James and the Neuse and the Alleghanies and the Atlantic, it was manifest that the end was near. It only remains to show how in the last wrestle these men comported themselves, and how when they at last broke down under a burden too heavy to bear, the fabric of the revolt which they had for four years upheld on their bayonets, fell with a crash that resounded through the world.

II.

LEE'S INITIATIVE.

The glories of spring-tide that adorned the hills and vales of beautiful Virginia, and made her woods vocal with the song of birds, brought no vernal promise to the sad army of wearied and half-famished men that lay in the trenches of Petersburg. They knew that the sun that thawed the frost from the roads did but make paths on which the adversary, with whom they could no longer hope to cope, would move to their destruction. There was one consoling reflection to them, however: the end was near. And, after all their fatigues and privations, even this was welcome. Yet it was an army of high mettle and of great traditions, and it could not do otherwise than prepare to go down with honor.

In the situation in which Lee found himself there was but one course open to him whereby he might hope to prolong the contest. This was to abandon the effort to defend Richmond and retire to an interior line, either in the direction of

Lynchburg or Danville, where uniting with the forces of Johnston he might, by maintaining a defensive system, cause the Union army to undertake a long and costly campaign. This would indeed have been to give up the Confederate capital, but with a re-enforcement of twenty thousand men Lee could have shown that the capital was at his headquarters.

Now, waiving the ethical question of the rightfulness or wrongfulness of the cause whereof Lee was the military head, it was manifestly his duty as a soldier to maintain the struggle as long as possible. The turns of fortune in war are infinitely various, and many an army has come out of a seemingly desperate strait triumphant. A Southern writer has indeed averred that Lee intended to surrender before evacuating Richmond. If so, he was guilty of the murder of every one of his soldiers that fell after that intent was formed. But it is not by the standard of such men's pusillanimous instincts that the soul of a great commander is to be judged. Lee, beyond a doubt, never meant to surrender until he was *compelled* to surrender.

It is now certain that at this time the Confederate commander had fully resolved to adopt the course of evacuating Petersburg and Richmond and effecting a junction with the forces of Johnston on the Danville line. Preparations for the intended movement were begun early in the month of March: Johnston was to refuse his left if Sherman advanced; flat-boats were collected for bridging the affluents of the Roanoke; rations were to be accumulated at Amelia Courthouse, and the line of retreat and columns of march were arranged. Before he could put this purpose into execution, however, it was necessary for Lee to assume the offensive against Grant —not so much in obedience to the rule of art that prescribes a vigorous stroke of offence as the best mask for a withdrawal, but for a special reason which it is important here to indicate because it has not hitherto been understood.

In the plan of retreat which Lee had marked out for his army he did not purpose moving by the north bank of the Appomattox, but by the south side, which is much the shorter

line to Amelia Courthouse, which was the point of concentration of his columns on the Danville railroad. The direct route to that place is by what is known as the Cox road, which leaves Petersburg above the Boydton plankroad and runs due west, following the line of the Appomattox. But by the gradual extension of the left of the Army of the Potomac towards the Boydton plankroad, the flank of the Union line approached so near the Cox road as to make Lee's withdrawal thereby a very perilous operation. He resolved, therefore, to strike a sudden blow, and to give this blow such a direction that it would be necessary for Grant to withdraw his left, which would completely relieve Lee's proposed line of retreat. This object he supposed would be best realized by striking the contrary flank from that on which he wished the effect to be produced. Accordingly, he planned to break through the right of the Union line hard by where that flank rested on the Appomattox east of Petersburg. Special considerations of a topographical character indicated Fort Steadman as the most advantageous point of attack.

The project of assaulting the Union front at all was bold. The Army of the Potomac lay ensconced in its lines of contravallation. A cordon of redoubts of a powerful profile and armed with the heaviest metal, studded this line. Infantry parapets, amply manned, stretched from work to work. Covering the fronts of approach were labyrinthine acres of abatis, while all the appliances of ditches, entanglements, and *chevaux de frise* lent their aid to make defence sure and assault folly. But plans in war are sometimes successful on account of their very boldness; and Lee's purpose was to seize Fort Steadman and the neighboring works, crown the commanding ground in rear of this part of the Federal line and lay hold of the military railway to City Point. If Grant turned to fight him in this position, he was prepared to receive battle, but if Grant should make a detour towards City Point to recover his communications, the Confederate commander designed, instead of awaiting attack, to withdraw immediately. In any event, Lee counted that the blow struck at Grant's

right would cause the retirement of his left flank, where was the greater accumulation of force, and that thus the Cox road would be rendered entirely free. The morning of the 25th of March was appointed for the attack. It was to be made by two divisions under Gordon; but to render it as forcible as possible, all the additional troops available (about twenty thousand men) were disposed ready to support it.

The opposing lines were, at the locality of Fort Steadman, very close—that work being on a considerable salient: so that the interval was not above one hundred and fifty yards. This part of the line was garnished by troops of the Ninth Corps. In the gray dawn the Confederate column of attack, having previously formed, moved out noiselessly from the works. The space to be overpassed being not great, a rush of a few moments brought the Confederates to the Union intrenchments, which must have been guarded with little vigilance; for Fort Steadman was surprised and taken by a *coup de main*. Of the garrison of the Fort, which was the Fourteenth New York foot-artillerists, many were taken prisoners and the rest fled. The Third brigade of the First division of the Ninth Corps met a similar fate. The guns of the captured redoubt were immediately turned by the Confederates on the neighboring works, and in consequence batteries Nine, Ten, and Eleven, on its flanks, were abandoned by the Union troops and occupied by the enemy.

Thus far the triumph; but it was destined to be short-lived. To rift open the system of Union works it was necessary that the wedge thus entered should be driven home; or, in other words, it was needful that the storming-party should be followed up and sustained by a powerful column to pass beyond and seize the commanding crest in rear of the Federal line. Till this was done nothing was gained; for in the system of fortification on which the Federal line was constructed, a partial break in the line was not an irretrievable loss—each work being so well commanded by those on its flanks that to make any one point tenable by an enemy every thing on its right and left must be cleared.

It is well known that there was great dereliction of duty on the part of the supporting columns; for Gordon's attack was left almost wholly unsupported, notwithstanding that Lee had massed in the vicinity all his available force. Those who had gone forward then made a feeble attempt against Fort Hascall, the work next on the left of Fort Steadman. They could, however, make no impression on this; and no sooner had they rallied on Fort Steadman than they found themselves not only subjected to a terrible artillery fire, but in turn assailed by the troops of the Ninth Corps brought forward to meet the emergency. The counter-assault was made by Hartranft's division; and it now needed little to determine the Confederates to retire. Yet to withdraw was less easy than it had been to advance, for the lines of retreat were so covered by the cross-fire of artillery directed from all the adjacent works that the Confederates found themselves corralled in the narrow space between the two lines, and about two thousand preferred to give themselves up as prisoners rather than brave the deadly perils of the rain of fire.

The primal stroke had, indeed, been brilliant, but not being pushed to a conclusion, it left no solid advantage to the enemy, while it entailed a loss that could be ill afforded by Lee. This embraced not alone the captures above noted, but a heavy sacrifice in killed and wounded—probably not less than twenty-five hundred, which was the aggregate of the Union casualties.

Nor was this affair unaccompanied by some positive military advantages to the Union side. Employing that manœuvre which in fencing is known as the *riposte* or parry and thrust, General Meade threw forward the whole line of the Sixth and Second corps, which were to the left of the Ninth, and the troops succeeded in wresting from the Confederates their strongly-intrenched picket-line, which gave ground that was of value in the subsequent assaults.

Admirably as Lee's plan was laid, admirably as it was adapted to effect the desired end of relieving the pressure upon his right, the failure of the execution was most signal. This

is easy to account for. The Army of Northern Virginia was no longer capable of the efforts required in carrying out such an enterprise, and it must have been with a pang that Lee felt that arm of strength, so long obedient to his will, fail now to follow the motions of his spirit.

III

THE ARMIES UNLEASHED.

Lee's act of offence neither retarded nor precipitated the catastrophe, for Grant having forefixed the 29th of March as the day on which he would open the campaign, held firmly to his intent, pushing forward meanwhile his preparations for the grand movement.

To exhibit in its details the plan of operations devised by the lieutenant-general, I give, in the accompanying note, the text of the order then drawn up.* It will be noted that in its

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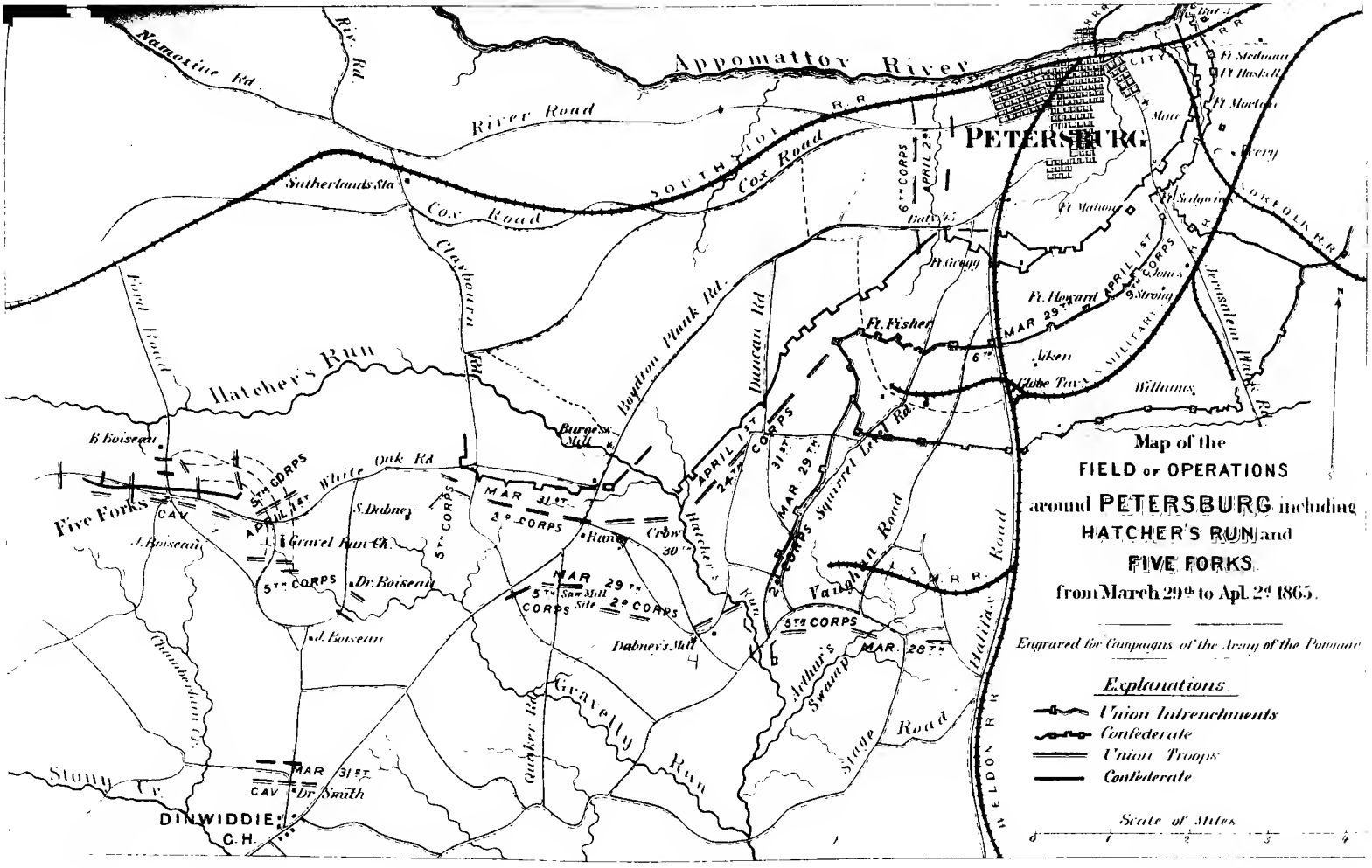
* "CITY POINT, VA., March 24, 1865.

"GENERAL:—On the 29th instant the armies operating against Richmond will be moved by our left for the double purpose of turning the enemy out of his present position around Petersburg, and to insure the success of the cavalry under General Sheridan, which will start at the same time, in its efforts to reach and destroy the Southside and Danville railroads. Two corps of the Army of the Potomac will be moved at first in two columns, taking the two roads crossing Hatcher's Run nearest where the present line held by us strikes that stream, both moving towards Dinwiddie Courthouse.

"The cavalry under General Sheridan, joined by the division now under General Davies, will move at the same time by the Weldon road and the Jerusalem plankroad, turning west from the latter before crossing the Nottoway, and west with the whole column before reaching Stony Creek. General Sheridan will then move independently, under other instructions which will be given him. All dismounted cavalry belonging to the Army of the Potomac, and the dismounted cavalry from the Middle Military Division not required for guarding property belonging to their arm of service, will report to Brigadier-General Benham, to be added to the defences of City Point. Major-General Parke will be left in command of all the army left for holding the lines about


Map of the
FIELD OF OPERATIONS
around PETERSBURG including
HATCHER'S RUN and
FIVE FORKS
from March 29th to Apl. 2d 1865.
Engraved for Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac
Explanations.
Union Intrenchments
Confederate
Union Troops
Confederate
Scale of Miles
0 1 2 3 4
Appomattox River
PETERSBURG
Namozine Rd.
River Road
Cox Road
Sutherlands Sta
Claybourn Rd.
Boydton Plank Rd.
Duncan Rd
Hatcher's Run
Ford Road
White Oak Rd
Five Forks
Gravel Run Ch.
Dr. Boiseau
J. Boiseau
S. Dabney
Burgess Mill
Crow
Dabney's Mill
Squirrel Level Rd.
Vaughan Road
Arthur's Swamp
Stage Road
Halifax Road
Gravelly Run
Quaker Rd
Chamberlain Cr.
Stony Cr.
Dr. Smith
DINWIDDIE C.H.
Ft. Fisher
Ft. Howard
Ft. Gregg
Ft. Mahone
Ft. Sedgwick
Ft. Stedman
Ft. Haskell
Ft. Morton
Ft. Jones
Ft. Strong
Aiken
Globe Tav.
Williams
Jerusalem Plank Rd.
Norfolk R.R.
Weldon R.R.
Mine
Cavy
Mar 29th
April 1st
Mar 31st
Mar 28th
Mar 29th
5th Corps
2d Corps
6th Corps
Cav
Saw Mill Site
Ranch
Dr. Smith

distinguishing features this plan was a repetition of that which had so often been essayed by Grant. It repeated the prevailing characteristic of a left turning column pivoting on

Petersburg and City Point, subject, of course, to orders from the commander of the Army of the Potomac. The Ninth Army Corps will be left intact to hold the present line of works, so long as the whole line now occupied by us is held. If, however, the troops to the left of the Ninth Corps are withdrawn, then the left of the corps may be thrown back so as to occupy the position held by the army prior to the capture of the Weldon road. All troops to the left of the Ninth Corps will be held in readiness to move at the shortest notice by such route as may be designated when the order is given.

"General Ord will detach three divisions, two white and one colored, or so much of them as he can, and hold his present lines, and march for the present left of the Army of the Potomac. In the absence of further orders, or until further orders are given, the white divisions will follow the left column of the Army of the Potomac, and the colored division the right column. During the movement, Major-General Weitzel will be left in command of all the forces remaining behind from the Army of the James.

"The movement of troops from the Army of the James will commence on the night of the 21st instant. General Ord will leave behind the minimum number of cavalry necessary for picket duty, in the absence of the main army. A cavalry expedition from General Ord's command will also be started from Suffolk, to leave there on Saturday, the 1st of April, under Colonel Sumner, for the purpose of cutting the railroad about Hicksford. This, if accomplished, will have to be a surprise, and therefore from three to five hundred men will be sufficient. They should, however, be supported by all the infantry that can be spared from Norfolk and Portsmouth, as far out as to where the cavalry crosses the Blackwater. The crossing should probably be at Uniten. Should Colonel Sumner succeed in reaching the Weldon road, he will be instructed to do all the damage possible to the triangle of roads between Hicksford, Weldon, and Gaston. The railroad-bridge at Weldon being fitted up for the passage of carriages, it might be practicable to destroy any accumulation of supplies the enemy may have collected south of the Roanoke. All the troops will move with four days' rations in haversacks, and eight days' in wagons. To avoid as much hauling as possible, and to give the Army of the James the same number of days' supply with the Army of the Potomac, General Ord will direct his commissary and quartermaster to have sufficient supplies delivered at the terminus of the road to fill up in passing. Sixty rounds of ammunition per man will be taken in wagons, and as much grain as the transportation on hand will carry, after taking the specified amount of other supplies. The densely wooded country in which the army has to operate making the use of much artillery impracticable, the amount taken with the army will be reduced to six or eight guns to each division, at the option of the army commanders.

"All necessary preparations for carrying these directions into operation may

the right, directed against the Confederate right flank, and accompanied by a cavalry expedition to cut the Confederate railway communications.

But, though in form this operation closely resembled more than one previously attempted movement, there were several provisions of the execution that caused it to differ materially from these, and gave it a much surer promise of success. Former moves had commonly embraced two efforts, each necessarily weak, directed the one against the Confederate left, on the north side of the James; the other against the

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be commenced at once. The reserves of the Ninth Corps should be massed as much as possible. Whilst I would not now order an unconditional attack on the enemy's line by them, they should be ready, and should make the attack, if the enemy weakens his line in their front, without waiting for orders. In case they carry the line, then the whole of the Ninth Corps could follow up, so as to join or co-operate with the balance of the army. To prepare for this, the Ninth Corps will have rations issued to them, same as the balance of the army. General Weitzel will keep vigilant watch upon his front, and if found at all practicable to break through at any point, he will do so. A success north of the James should be followed up with great promptness. An attack will not be feasible unless it is found that the enemy has detached largely. In that case it may be regarded as evident that the enemy are relying upon their local reserves principally for the defence of Richmond. Preparations may be made for abandoning all the line north of the James, except inclosed works—only to be abandoned, however, after a break is made in the lines of the enemy.

"By these instructions a large part of the armies operating against Richmond is left behind. The enemy, knowing this, may, as an only chance, strip their lines to the merest skeleton, in the hope of advantage not being taken of it, whilst they hurl every thing against the moving column, and return. It cannot be impressed too strongly upon commanders of troops left in the trenches not to allow this to occur without taking advantage of it. The very fact of the enemy coming out to attack, if he does so, might be regarded as almost conclusive evidence of such a weakening of his lines. I would have it particularly enjoined upon corps-commanders that, in case of an attack from the enemy, those not attacked are not to wait for orders from the commanding officer of the army to which they belong, but that they will move promptly, and notify the commander of their action. I would also enjoin the same action on the part of division commanders when other parts of their corps are engaged. In like manner, I would urge the importance of following up a repulse of the enemy.

"U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant-General.

"MAJOR-GENERALS MEADE, ORD, and SHERIDAN."

Confederate right, southwest of Petersburg. The present operation was confined to one powerful effort, directed against Lee's right and vulnerable flank. Former moves had presented the anomaly of a turning column pivoting on a force stronger than itself. The present operation was made by a turning column so weighty that it contingently embraced the whole Army of the Potomac, with the exception of the Ninth Corps, which alone was to be the pivot of the manœuvre. Moreover, to this column was to be added not only the important accession of Sheridan's cavalry, but nearly the whole of the Army of the James, three divisions of which were to be transferred to the lines before Petersburg, leaving in the works on the Richmond side of the river only a minimum force.

Sheridan, coming in from his expedition, joined the army before Petersburg on the 27th. The same day, General Ord, at this time commanding the Army of the James, moved over from the Richmond front to the lines before Petersburg. His active force embraced two divisions of the Twenty-fourth Corps, under General Gibbon; one division of the Twenty-fifth Corps, under Brigadier-General Birney, and a small division of cavalry, under Brigadier-General McKenzie. These troops took position along the left of the intrenched lines lately held by the Second and Fifth corps, which being now relieved were foot-loose to manœuvre by the left. The movement was begun on the morning of the 29th of March, as had been appointed.

In order to attain the point against which the turning column of infantry was directed, it was necessary to pass to the west side of Hatcher's Run. Breaking camp early on the morning of the 29th, the corps of Warren and Humphreys moved by the rear and left (that is, to the southwest), so as to make the movement without observation. Hatcher's Run was passed without opposition of moment, and the two corps, facing northward, advanced to effect the initial manœuvre of the campaign.*

* A reliable map of the region in which the movements to be described

It is now proper to point out whither this advance tended, and the developments that arose therefrom.

The right of Lee's intrenched line, running southwestward from Petersburg, crossed Hatcher's Run at the Boydton plankroad. Thence it extended for a considerable distance

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took place will be found opposite page 578. This will enable the reader to follow the details of the initial operations of the 29th of March, which I here add.

THE FIFTH CORPS.—Warren moved at three A. M., and turning southwestward crossed Rowantry Creek at a point a short distance below where that stream is formed by the junction of Hatcher's and Gravelly runs. A few shots were fired by the enemy's videttes, probably as an alarm signal, but no opposition was made to the crossing. While a bridge for the vehicles was being laid, the troops scrambled across on fallen trees and the wreck of a former bridge. Warren's route then led westward by the stage-road. At a distance of four miles from Hatcher's Run, the Quaker road runs northward from the stage-road to the Boydton plankroad. Warren was directed to move up this road, which, at a distance of two miles, crosses Gravelly Run. This stream could not be readily forded, but the skirmish line succeeded in crossing, and drove off a small force of the Confederates. A bridge was then laid and the northward movement continued.

THE SECOND CORPS.—While Warren was making this wide detour, Humphreys' corps had passed Hatcher's Run by the Vaughan road-crossing, four miles above Warren's point of passage. Turning northward it followed the run up-stream. This movement placed Humphreys' corps on the right of Warren, and both corps pushed northward—the latter moving on the Quaker road, the former through the woods between that road and Hatcher's Run. But as Humphreys' advance was made in an extended line through very difficult woods, the connection was made and broken continually. The enemy's skirmishers were driven in, but no main line was encountered, and darkness stayed further advance.

SHERIDAN'S CAVALRY.—Sheridan moved by way of Reams' Station and Malone's crossing on Rowantry Creek, where he had to construct a bridge. At this point the cavalry encountered a Confederate cavalry picket, which was driven to the left across Stony Creek, capturing a few prisoners, from whom and from scouts it was learned that the Confederate cavalry was at Stony Creek Depot on the Weldon Railroad, twelve miles to Sheridan's left and rear. Believing that by pushing on to Dinwiddie Courthouse, he would compel the Confederate cavalry to make a wide detour in order to rejoin Lee's right, he continued the march from Malone's, where Custer's division was left to protect the trains, to Dinwiddie Courthouse, distant twelve miles. This point was reached at five P. M., after encountering only a small picket of the enemy. At Dinwiddie, Sheridan bivouacked.

westward, parallel with Hatcher's Run, and along what is known as the White Oak road. This line directly covered Lee's main communication by the Southside Railroad. Four miles further to the west of the termination of this intrenched front a detached line, running also along the White Oak road, covered an important strategic point where several roads from the north and south, converging on the White Oak road, form what is known as the Five Forks. With this, however, we have no immediate concern, as the advance of Warren and Humphreys led not against this isolated position of the enemy, but against the right flank of Lee's continuous line.

The distance to be traversed by the turning column was not great, but progress was toilsome and through a difficult country. When Warren, on the left, moving by the Quaker road, had advanced to within about two miles of the Confederate position, the resistance, which as thus far encountered had been easily swept away by the skirmishers, became more spirited, and the leading division under Griffin was assailed by a line of battle. A warm action ensued, the brunt of which was borne by Chamberlain's brigade. Griffin was able to hold his own and repulse the Confederates, who left in his hands a hundred prisoners and their dead and wounded. The Union loss was about three hundred and seventy in killed and wounded. After this, Warren pressed on until he drew the fire from the Confederate intrenched line on the White Oak road.

Humphreys, on the right of Warren, continued his advance through a dense forest and undergrowth. He had neared, but not struck, the enemy's main line when darkness stayed his further progress.

While affairs thus passed with the infantry, the column of horse under Sheridan, sweeping a more adventurous radius, was manœuvring further to the left. That evening, after slight opposition, Sheridan occupied Dinwiddie Courthouse, six miles southwest of where the troops of Warren and Humphreys lay on their arms.

Such was the situation of affairs on the night of the 29th.

The Union line was unbroken from the Appomattox to Dinwiddie Courthouse, and was in the following order: Parke, Wright, Ord, Humphreys, Warren, Sheridan. In the morning Sheridan was to cut loose from the army and start on a distant expedition against the Southside and Danville railroads. But the lieutenant-general now altered his plan with respect to the cavalry. "I now feel," wrote General Grant to Sheridan, at Dinwiddie, on the night of the 29th, "I now feel like ending the matter, if it is possible to do so, before going back. I do not want you, therefore, to cut loose and go after the enemy's roads at present. In the morning, push around the enemy, and get on to his right rear. We will act all together as one army here until it is seen what can be done with the enemy."

If from some lofty tower of observation one could that night have looked down into the adverse lines, there would have been seen within the Confederate camp a strange stir, and amid the darkness a noiseless activity, and the outlines of moving masses; but the explanation would not have been far to seek, for the head of every column was turned *westward*.

Sudden as had been Grant's manœuvre that day, it had not escaped his antagonist's quick perception, and, knowing well how and where the blow would fall, Lee was already hastening to interpose such a buckler of defence as would ward off the stroke from that vital part against which it was plainly directed.

The situation in which Lee now found himself was almost tragic; and if even to the gods there be something pleasing in the spectacle of a brave man struggling against fate, it will not be unlawful, while according to the conduct of the Union commander the admiration due the power and persistency that marked it, to feel a like sentiment for the unfailing resource with which the Confederate commander, hoping against hope, comported himself in a desperate strait.

It was essential that Lee should secure the defence of his right in so solid a manner that the powerful column which

Grant had thrust out by the left should not prevail against those vital lines whereon the Confederates depended for their daily food. It was at the same time indispensable that he should maintain the long intrenched line that covered Petersburg and Richmond, for his antagonist warily watched all its extent, if so be there might offer an opening to break through. From his left, northeast of Richmond, to his right, southwest of Petersburg, there were thirty-five miles of breastwork which it behooved Lee to guard, and all the force remaining to him was thirty-seven thousand muskets, and a small body of broken down horse! But one resource remained—the oft-tried resource of stripping his intrenched lines to the uttermost, and with the force thus gathered rushing to the menaced right with the view of checking—if possible, of beating back—the turning column.

At this time two divisions of Longstreet's corps guarded the lines of Richmond, and Mahone's division of Hill's corps the front of Bermuda Hundred. These Lee did not dare to weaken, for, not so well informed as usual, he was not master of all the bearings of the Union commander's operations. Unaware that Grant had already removed three of the four divisions that had been confronting the Richmond force, Lee retained Longstreet where he was, but instructed his lieutenant to move to the Petersburg side as soon as he should detect any weakening of the adverse lines. (Not till four days afterwards, and when too late, did Longstreet detect how feeble was the force opposed to him). On the Petersburg side were the divisions of Wilcox, Pickett, Bushrod Johnson, and the remnant of Ewell's corps, now under Gordon. Taking from these corps all he dared—two divisions and three brigades—he assembled a force of about fifteen thousand, and with this he hurried to the protection of his menaced right. He left behind him six or seven thousand men in the Petersburg intrenchments; but as these were strung out to garnish nine miles of breastwork, they made little more than sentinels. To the force set foot-free, Lee added Fitz Lee's division of cavalry, and during the night moved to the right to

take position within the lines in front of which the two Federal corps had been arrested by the darkness.

The morning of Thursday, the 30th, saw the Union force in position, ready to strike. Lee was yet poorly prepared to withstand a blow, though all night long his troops had been filing to the right. But in this situation fortune intervened in his behalf; and Grant, who "felt like making an end of it," found himself embargoed by adverse weather just when all was ready for the stroke. During the night of the 29th a heavy storm of rain fell, and this continued without cessation during the 30th, so that the roads became almost impracticable for wheels or hoofs, the swampy country in which the army was operating was flooded, heavy details had to be sent to assist the trains, which were nearly immovable in the mud, and all aggressive action had to be suspended. Yet Lee's infantry could tramp through the mire when wheeled vehicles might not move, and the day's delay permitted the Confederate commander to complete his dispositions.

Nothing was done on the Union side save to push up the corps of Humphreys and Warren close in front of the Confederate line on the White Oak road and Hatcher's Run: Sheridan indeed dispatched a body of his cavalry towards Five Forks, but the Confederates were found there in numbers too strong to be dislodged by the force sent forward. It therefore returned to Dinwiddie.*

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* The following extracts, from the roports of Generals Warren, Humphreys, and Sheridan, present the details of whatever was done by the Fifth and Second corps, and the cavalry, on the 30th of March:

THE FIFTH CORPS.—"It commenced raining in the night, and continued to do so heavily all day on the 30th. During this day General Griffin's line was advanced, with heavy skirmishing up the Boydton plankroad, so as to confine the enemy, near Burgess's Mill, to his breastwork along the White Oak road. A reconnoissance by General Ayres' division was also made as far west as where the enemy's line along the White Oak road turned northward to Hatcher's Run, and our picket-line established near the White Oak Ridge. Finding, on personal examination, that though we could see the road, our pickets did not occu-

Friday, the 31st, saw the ground still so unfavorable to movement that active operations were formally pretermitted by General Grant. But while the Union commander thus proposed, his opponent willed otherwise. It now remains to show how, by the initiative of the Confederate commander, action was precipitated: how, aggressive to the last, he sought to repeat the bold stroke whereby he had foiled so many previous

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py it, I directed this occupation to be made that evening."—Warren: Report of Operations.

THE SECOND CORPS.—"At six A. M. on the 30th the advance was resumed, Hays' division on the right being supported by Turner's division of the Twenty-fourth Corps. The enemy was driven inside his intrenchments along Hatcher's Run and the White Oak road, this position being attained at about half-past eight or nine A. M. The right of the corps (General Hays' right) rested on Hatcher's Run, near the Crow House, and the enemy's redoubt in that vicinity. Turner's division of the Twenty-fourth Corps took post along Hatcher's Run, connecting with the old intrenchments which were occupied by the Twenty-fourth Corps. The left of the corps connected with the Fifth Corps near the Boydton plankroad, in the vicinity of Mrs. Rainie's. The line of battle was extended in front of the enemy's intrenchments, and was pressed as closely to them as practicable without assaulting. The left, on the Boydton plankroad, was subsequently advanced in conjunction with the Fifth Corps, so as to include nearly the whole of the Dabney Mill road."—Humphreys: Report of Operations.

SHERIDAN'S CAVALRY.—"Early on the morning of the 30th of March, I directed General Merritt to send the first division, Brigadier-General Devin commanding, to gain possession of the Five Forks, or White Oak road, and directed General Crook to send General Davies' brigade of his division to the support of General Devin.

"Gregg's brigade, of Crook's division, was held on the Boydton plankroad, and guarded the crossing of Stony Creek, forcing the enemy's cavalry that was moving from Stony Creek depot to form a connection with the right of their army, to make a wide detour, as I had anticipated, on the south side of Stony Creek, and west of Chamberlain's Bed—a very fatiguing march, in the bad condition of the roads. A very heavy rain fell during this day, aggravating the swampy nature of the ground, and rendering the movement of troops almost impossible. General Merritt's reconnoissance developed the enemy in strong force on the White Oak road, in the vicinity of Five Forks, and there was some heavy skirmishing throughout the day."—Sheridan: Report of Operations.

turning attempts. But, first of all, it is needful to describe the precise position of Warren's corps, which held the left of the Union line, and certain changes in its disposition that had that morning taken place. Though these changes had not, as has been supposed, any important bearing on Lee's action (which had been predetermined), they are nevertheless necessary to the just appreciation of what followed.

During the 30th Warren had held position, with the divisions of Griffin and Crawford, on the Boydton plankroad, only the division of Ayres being thrown forward to the west of it. But at daylight of the 31st, his right division under Griffin was relieved by the division of Miles of the Second Corps, so as to permit a greater development to the left. Warren then moved his entire corps to the westward of the Boydton plankroad, and pushed it forward so that its pressure was directly upon the extreme right of the Confederate intrenched line on the White Oak road. The position of his corps was then in this wise: Ayres' division thrown forward to within a few hundred yards of the White Oak road; Crawford's division in rear of and somewhat to the right of Ayres; Griffin's division in rear of and somewhat to the right of Crawford. In case of any hostile sally on the part of Lee, the position held by Warren was one of great delicacy; for as Sheridan was isolated from the infantry by several miles, Warren formed the very left of the Union line, and had to protect his own flank.

Thus placed, Warren made a disposition of his troops that was perfectly conformable to correct principles, and one that showed a much juster appreciation of the method of action suited to such a situation than was manifested in the conventional system in vogue. In spite of the many costly proofs already received of the futility of long, thin, and consequently everywhere weak lines of battle, upon the naked flanks of which Lee had made a series of constantly successful swoops, each new turning operation saw this error repeated. Warren, however, discerning truly what had always been Lee's opportunity, in place of attempting to maintain a weakly extended line from the left of Humphreys' corps, disposed his troops

in masses *en échelon*, so that they could meet attack from any direction, and readily re-enforce any point assailed. To make his position still more secure, Warren desired to throw forward the skirmishers on his left to seize the White Oak road, beyond the termination of the Confederate intrenched line. By this means he would observe closely the road by which Lee would move in any operation to strike Warren's flank. He therefore ordered Ayres to advance a brigade from his division and drive off the enemy from that road, or develop in what force it was held. On communicating this order to General Meade, Warren was directed, if he found by his reconnoissance that he could get possession of the White Oak road, to do so, notwithstanding previous instructions to suspend operations for the day *

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* "I beg leave to call attention to a statement in the report of General Grant, which must have been made from erroneous information. 'On the morning of the 31st, General Warren reported favorably to getting possession of the White Oak road, and was directed to do so. To accomplish this, he moved with one division, instead of his whole corps' Now, strictly speaking, 'On the morning of the 31st General Warren did *not* report favorably to getting possession of the White Oak road, and was *not* directed to do so. Nor 'to accomplish this, did he move with one division instead of his whole corps.' * * The operation I directed was to secure a good position for our picket-line, and to develop with what force the White Oak road, in General Ayres' vicinity, was held. My instructions to General Ayres were to advance his picket-line, using a brigade as support, if necessary. I informed General Meade of this, and he, in a dispatch I received about eleven A. M., directed that, 'should you determine by your reconnoissance that you can get possession of, and hold the White Oak road, you are to do so, notwithstanding the orders to suspend operations.'

"Thus it appears that I did not move with a division, but with a reconnoitring brigade, which reconnoissance it was necessary to make to ascertain where to use the whole corps if it were to be all used. The order to take possession of the road was contingent upon the result of the reconnoissance. It is also evident that only in a very modified sense could I be said to have as yet reported favorably to getting possession of the road. At most, I had but expressed my willingness to try, venturing a little on my own responsibility to achieve a desired end, and ready to make every hazard, if ordered.

"Simultaneous with this advance of General Ayres' picket-line, the enemy attacked us in heavy force."—Warren: Report of Operations.

Hardly, however, was this reconnoissance begun by an advance of the brigade of Winthrop, at half-past ten A. M., than a heavy attack fell upon Warren.

It was Lee's initiative. Often before had he broken up these turning movements in their inception by falling heavily on the exposed flank of the Union force. Once more he essayed the like blow, and, to give it all the weight possible, he threw into it the bulk of the troops he had collected and formed on his right.

The attack upon Warren was sudden, and burst out simultaneously both from the north and west. It was indeed near attaining almost the wonted success, for Ayres' troops, finding themselves enveloped in the thick woods, easily gave way, falling back on Crawford, whose division, disorganized by the fugitives, broke in turn. Happily the disposition Warren had made of his force rendered this disruption far from irretrievable. No disaster had occurred, for the troops ran rather because they were bewildered by a sudden flank and rear attack in a dense and swampy forest, than because they were forcibly beaten back. When, however, they emerged into the clearer ground in the rear, where Griffin's division held post, they were soon rallied. The good effect of the *échelon* arrangement was now seen. Griffin maintained his ground immovably. The Confederate onset was soon checked, and Warren, gathering together his forces, prepared to make a counter-attack. To assist this, General Humphreys promptly advanced Miles' division on the right of Warren. While the Fifth Corps attacked in front, Miles assailed the Confederate left flank. The operations of both forces were spirited and forcible, and resulted in repulsing the enemy at all points, and driving him back to his old line on the White Oak road. In the Fifth Corps, Chamberlain's brigade was especially distinguished, capturing nearly the whole of the Fifty-sixth Virginia regiment, with its colors. Miles also took one flag and many prisoners. Humphreys, with his remaining two divisions, attempted also to carry the enemy's works covering the Boydton road crossing of the White Oak road and those on the

west side of Hatcher's Run; but these efforts met no success.*

To Lee paucity of numbers made economy of life so imperative a duty, that, though he was pushed by his temper and the necessities of his situation to attempt an aggressive policy, he knew well that he could only hope for such success as sudden swoops might bring, and that he was in no condition to attempt a general offensive. Hence, when he found himself foiled in the attack against the left of the infantry, he drew back with but slight effort to resist the countercharge of Warren, and sought some other favorable opening for a blow. Such an opening was presented by the cavalry of Sheridan, who, by manœuvres now to be described, had gained a position that was very menacing to Lee's right flank.

From the position of Sheridan at Dinwiddie Courthouse the distance to the Five Forks was about eight miles due north; and from Five Forks the distance to Lee's intrenched line confronting Warren and Humphreys was but four miles east. Holding Five Forks, one holds the strategic key that opens up the whole region which Lee was now seeking to cover. Sheridan, appreciating the immense importance of this point, determined, notwithstanding the obstruction to the movements of cavalry caused by the storm that had overtaken the army, and the consequent increase of operations, to secure its possession. Nowise disconcerted by the failure of the attempt of the previous day, he, on the morning of the 31st, directed

* The details of Humphreys' operations on the 31st are as follows: Miles, by his advance, succeeded in occupying the White Oak road; but the enemy's intrenchments here covered a strong position on the crest of a long slope, with wide slashings in front and abatis covering the ditch, with artillery at short intervals. De Trobiand's brigade of Mott's division was put into position to strengthen Miles, and subsequently McAllister's brigade was extended to the left to perfect the connection. During the day General Mott made an attempt to carry the redoubts and intrenchments covering the Boydton road crossing, but without success. General Hays likewise attempted to carry the Crow House redoubt, but was prevented by the heavy slashing, which was impassable for any large number of troops.

Devin's division again towards Five Forks. Finding that this body encountered a considerable opposition, he re-enforced it with Davies' brigade of Crook's division, while Crook, with his other two brigades, under Smith and Gregg, were ordered to the left, and encountered a hostile cavalry force at Chamberlain's Creek, a little west of Dinwiddie. With his two brigades Crook held this body in check, and Devin and Davies moved upon and seized Five Forks, which at the moment was guarded by but a small force, the Confederate cavalry being mainly on the west side of Chamberlain's Creek, and the infantry engaged with Warren.

But the tenure of Five Forks was not to be long. Having been foiled in the assault on Warren, Lee detached portions of the two divisions of infantry under Pickett and Bushrod Johnson, and moved them by the White Oak road westward to Five Forks. These falling upon the Union cavalry there, drove it out and back in confusion on Dinwiddie Courthouse. The Confederates then pushed rapidly forward on the west side of Chamberlain's Creek, but when they attempted to cross this, in order to strike Dinwiddie Courthouse, they were foiled by the stout resistance of Smith's brigade. They then effected a crossing higher up the creek, and falling upon Davies' brigade forced it back against the left flank of Devin's division, thus partially isolating all this force from Sheridan's main line at Dinwiddie Courthouse. In order to unite it on this line, Sheridan directed it to make a detour by the Boydton plankroad. The execution of this manœuvre appeared to the Confederates a forced retreat on the part of Devin, and, deceived by this, they made a left wheel, and were proceeding to follow him up. This tactical change caused the Confederates to present the flank and rear of their line of battle to Sheridan's force at Dinwiddie, whereupon, seizing the opportunity, he directed a charge to be made with the brigades of Gregg and Gibbs. This unlooked-for sally compelled the Confederates to face by the rear rank and give up the movement against Devin, who was thus enabled to rejoin the main body. Against this the Confederates now advanced with all the force of cavalry and

infantry present. In numbers the assailants were not superior to the Union cavalry, but they had an advantage in the range of the fire-arms of their infantry.

Thus placed, Sheridan displayed very commendable pluck. Having dismounted his troopers, he disposed them behind a slight breastwork previously prepared, and here, from their carbines, they poured so biting a fire into the ranks of the assailants that they were repulsed in the attack, and darkness prevented its renewal. The conduct of the men was certainly excellent; but it was a great relief when night intervened to abridge the attack of the Confederates, for the cavalry had been sorely handled in the action.

The tidings of Sheridan's situation received at headquarters led to the belief that he could not maintain himself at Dinwiddie unless re-enforced, and such was the alarm in regard to the safety of his force, that all dispositions became subordinated to the forwarding of troops to his succor. For this purpose Warren was, at nine P. M. of the 31st, ordered to send a division to Dinwiddie Courthouse by way of the Boydton plankroad; and two hours later, the concern about Sheridan growing meanwhile, he was directed to move with his two other divisions by a road to the west, with the idea that he would strike the rear of the Confederate force confronting Sheridan.*

* Previously to this—to wit, about five P. M., and before it became known that Sheridan was being pressed by the enemy—Warren had been directed to send a small force down the White Oak road to communicate with General Sheridan. Warren accordingly dispatched Bartlett's brigado, which moved across the country in a southwesterly direction, towards Sheridan's firing. Bartlett forced his way, after brisk skirmishing, to Gravelly Run, across which a hostile body was driven; but as it was much after dark before he completed his dispositions, no further advance could be made that night. When, however, an hour or two later, intelligence was received of what had befallen Sheridan, such was the alarm thereby inspired at headquarters, that it was even determined to go so far as to sacrifice the advanced position gained by the Fifth and Second corps. The following extract will show that General Warren was himself the first to suggest that he should be allowed to move with his whole corps, and attack in rear the force confronting Sheridan:

Warren promptly dispatched Ayres' division, as the one that could get under way most expeditiously; and proceeded to make arrangements to move with the other two divisions as soon as practicable. Had the roads been unobstructed, the march to Dinwiddie would not have occupied above four or five hours. When, however, the project was formed of sending Warren to succor Sheridan, there was one very important fact which was not known at headquarters, but which was of a nature to prevent any possibility of a force reaching Sheridan that night. This was the fact that the bridge over Gravelly Run, by the Boydton plankroad, was destroyed. It was, by consequence, necessary for General Ayres to halt at the run until an infantry bridge was built. This consumed till near two A. M. of April 1st, when Ayres crossed his division and hastened towards Dinwiddie.

When the condition of the crossing of Gravelly Run became known to General Meade, that commander, believing that Sheridan "could not maintain himself at Dinwiddie without re-enforcements," suggested (in a dispatch received by General Warren at one A. M.) other methods by which the desired end

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"At 8.40 P. M. I received by telegraph the following, marked 'Confidential,' from General Webb, chief of staff, written 8.30 P. M.: 'The probability is, that *we will have to contract our lines to-night*. You will be required to hold, if possible, the Boydton plankroad and to Gravelly Run. Humphreys and Ord along the run. Be prepared to do this at short notice.'

"I regretted exceedingly to see this step foreshadowed; for I feared it would have the *morale* of giving a failure to our whole movement, as similar orders had done on previous occasions. It would, besides, relieve the enemy in front of Sheridan from the threatening attitude my position gave me. I therefore sent the following by telegraph, at 8.40 P. M., to General Webb: 'The line along the plankroad is very strong. One division, with my artillery, I think, can hold it, if we are not threatened, south of Gravelly Run, east of the plankroad. General Humphreys and my batteries, I think, could hold this securely, and *let me move down and attack the enemy at Dinwiddie Courthouse on one side, and Sheridan on the other*. On account of Bartlett's position, they (the enemy) will have to make a considerable detour to re-enforce their troops at that point from the north. Unless General Sheridan has been too badly handled, I think we have a chance for an open field-fight that should be made use of.'"—Warren: Report of Operations of March 29, 30, and 31.

might be accomplished. They did not, however, meet the real state of facts. He suggested that Warren should send troops both by the Boydton plankroad and by the Quaker road, further to the east, even if he should give up the meditated rear attack. But the distance to Dinwiddie by the Quaker road was above ten miles, and, at the advanced hour of the night at which the dispatch was received, it would have been impossible for the troops by that road to have reached Dinwiddie before eight A. M., by which time they could be of no use in holding that place. In this case the most direct route for the rear attack would be down the plankroad, by which Ayres' division was marching. Solicitous as General Warren was, therefore, of arriving for Sheridan's succor at the earliest possible moment, he justly judged that the desired end could be best attained by abiding the movements already begun, holding, meantime, the two divisions of Griffin and Crawford where they were, until he should hear that Ayres' division had reached Dinwiddie.

In the midst of this general anxiety for Sheridan, that officer himself had ceased to feel any solicitude touching his situation; for before midnight he knew that the enemy had withdrawn all but a mask of force from his front. Lee, in fact, could not afford to retain so considerable a body at Dinwiddie, both because it was very much out of position for the defence of the Confederate line on the White Oak road, and because the force thus isolated was directly menaced by Warren. It was, therefore, retired by Lee as soon as he could communicate with it, which was about ten P. M. of the 31st, and it fell back and took position at Five Forks, leaving only a cavalry picket, which also withdrew as soon as assailed at dawn. It was, in fact, seen hastily decamping by Ayres, when, at daylight of April 1st, he joined the cavalry. Sheridan followed up vigorously, putting his whole force in motion northward towards Five Forks. Meantime, Warren withdrew his two other divisions, which, marching directly across the country, joined the cavalry midway between Dinwiddie Courthouse and Five Forks at seven A. M., April 1st.

Full of doubts and fears as the night had been, morning dispelled these noxious vapors. The event proved a happy illustration of "All's well that ends well;" for, thanks to the good judgment of Warren in keeping his corps together, it was now in position where it could best be applied conjointly with the cavalry in a renewed effort against the Confederate position at Five Forks. Towards that position Sheridan was resolved to move, and in the operations that followed, Warren, with the Fifth Corps, came under his orders.

IV

FIVE FORKS AND PETERSBURG

The situation of the opposing forces on the morning of the 1st of April was somewhat peculiar. From the Appomattox to Hatcher's Run the Confederate line was so meagerly garnished with troops that there was but one man to every five yards of front. Confronting this line were the Union corps of Parke, Wright, Ord, and Humphreys. But the point of dispute was nowhere along these locked lines; and as, by times, in olden battles, the whole array of two opposing armies would stand still while one knight from each side engaged in single combat, so it seemed to be now tacitly agreed that the gage of battle was for the possession of the Five Forks—an isolated position four miles to the west of the Federal left and Confederate right. Hither Sheridan was moving, and here, as for the defence of a point of vital value, Lee had accumulated all the force he could spare.

In thus massing upon his right, Lee ran a great risk; for the Petersburg defences were left so inadequately defended, that they were incapable of withstanding a serious attack. But necessity left no alternative. It is worthy of note that there was no imperative need of delivering battle at Five Forks, for Sheridan's manœuvres by the left, together with the pressure of the Second and Fifth corps, had had so fully

the effect of drawing the Confederate strength to a head at that flank, that it was open to the Union force to break directly through the Petersburg defences. Indeed, both Wright and Ord, ascertaining from their reconnoissances the comparative nakedness of the Confederate works, reported favorably to assault on the 1st. But it was otherwise determined. There is, however, no occasion to note, otherwise than as a contingency of the situation, that the battle of Five Forks need not necessarily have been fought in order to have gained the capture of Petersburg. That, nevertheless, it was fortunate it was fought, will not be doubtful after the recital of the events of that brilliant action.

Pressing forward his cavalry, Sheridan, by spirited charges, drove the Confederates from two temporary lines, until, at two P. M., April 1st, he had confined them within their works at the Five Forks. The admirable method in which Sheridan combined the operations of cavalry and infantry—using the former as an impenetrable mask behind which he manœuvred with the latter—has already been seen in the history of the Valley campaign. This combination was now to receive a new and splendid illustration.

In pressing back the enemy into his works Sheridan had employed only his powerful body of horse, leaving the Fifth Corps behind, at the point where it had joined the cavalry in the morning. Now, however, that the Confederates were confined within the defences on the White Oak road, where they were closely enveloped by his numerous squadrons, he directed General Warren to bring forward the Fifth Corps, for the employment of which he devised a beautiful tactical manœuvre. He ordered General Merritt, while holding the enemy in front with the cavalry, to demonstrate as though he aimed to turn the Confederate right, and he directed Warren to form the infantry so that its full pressure would fall directly on the enemy's left flank. At the same time he sent McKenzie's division of cavalry, which had joined him that day, to the White Oak road to cover the right flank from any hostile force moving westward from the di-

rection of Petersburg. McKenzie executed his orders with skill and vigor, attacking a body of the enemy and driving it towards Petersburg, after which he countermarched and rejoined Sheridan in time to participate in the action.

Warren formed his corps before moving forward. He disposed Ayres' division on the left and Crawford's on the right, with Griffin's in reserve behind the right. Each of the two front divisions placed two brigades in front, each brigade in two lines of battle; and the third brigade in two lines of battle behind the centre of the two front lines. Griffin's division was posted in column of battalions in mass behind the right. In moving, the lines were instructed to keep closed to the left, and to preserve their direction in the woods by keeping the sun, which was shining brightly, in the same position over their left shoulders. The movement was to be forward to the White Oak road, at a point beyond the enemy's left flank, when the line was to swing round, pivoting on the left, and having formed itself perpendicular to the White Oak road, it was then to advance and fall upon the Confederate left flank.

Warren's dispositions being promptly completed by four P. M., he immediately then advanced. A few minutes brought the line to the White Oak road, distant about a thousand yards, when it changed front so as to face westward instead of northward. The Fifth Corps was now directly on the left flank and rear of the Confederates, with a line of battle formed perpendicular to their position. The enemy had, however, refused his left in a crotchet about a hundred yards in length turned northward at right angles to his main line, and covered by a strong breastwork screened behind a dense undergrowth of pines. Thence northward to Hatcher's Run, the Confederates pieced out the line by a slim picket. Ayres' division being the pivot on which Crawford's and Griffin's wheeled, effected its change of front first, and encountered the enemy's skirmishers in front of the position at the crotchet. That division covered nearly the whole of this refused line, so that Crawford and Ayres outflanked it to the north. Or nearly so: Crawford's division,

indeed, in changing front, having occasion to pass over some open ground, received on its left from this line a fire which caused the division to oblique to the right, so as to keep the protection of the woods and ridge while executing the manœuvre. Now, owing to this circumstance—to wit, that Crawford's division on the right of Ayres, having to manœuvre on a more extended radius and being also thrown more to the right to avoid the enemy's fire, was not able to change front so rapidly—it came about that Ayres' right was for a time "in air;" and as it received the same fire that Crawford's left had encountered, the troops on that flank became very unsteady, and many broke to the rear. This difficulty, however, was soon remedied. Griffin's division was drawn in towards the left to close up this interval, and Ayres' division assailing the enemy's intrenched crotchet, carried it by an impetuous charge, in which above a thousand prisoners and several battle-flags were taken. Griffin then fell upon the rear of the enemy's left, capturing the breastworks and fifteen hundred prisoners. At the same time Crawford, who was moving further to the right, advanced steadily in rear of the enemy's line, driving back the skirmishers all the way, and continually turning the left of any force opposing Ayres and Griffin, till he attained the Ford road, which runs directly northward from the centre of the Confederate rear, and thence across Hatcher's Run. The outlet for the enemy's escape northward being thus closed, Warren directed Crawford's line to swing round to face southward and advance upon the reverse side of the enemy's line.

The Confederates were now completely entrapped. Held as in a vice by the cavalry which enveloped their whole front and right, stung them with a biting fire, and charged at the signal of the musketry of the infantry, they now found a line of battle sweeping down on their rear. Thus placed, they did all that men may. Forming front both north and south, they met with a desperate valor this double onset. But it was vain. From the rear Warren swept down towards the White Oak road, Crawford taking four guns; and simultaneously the cavalry from the front charged upon this road with resistless

impetuosity. The whole centre was now carried, as the left had been before, and the Confederates, pressed front, flank, and rear, mostly threw down their arms. Having gained the White Oak road, Warren changed front again to the right and advanced westward, thus constantly taking in flank and rear whatever hostile force still continued to hold the right of the Confederate line. This had originally been about three miles in extent, but above two-thirds of it were now carried. Yet, vital in all its parts, what of the two divisions remained still continued the combat with unyielding mettle. Parrying the thrusts of the cavalry from the front, this poor scratch of a force threw back its left in a new and short crotchet so as to meet the advance of Warren, who continued to press in at right angles with the White Oak road. When the infantry, greatly elated with their success, but somewhat disorganized by marching and fighting so long in the woods, arrived before this new line, they halted and opened an untimely fusillade, though there had been orders not to halt. The officers, indeed, urged their men forward, but they continued to fire without advancing. Seeing this hesitation, Warren dashed forward, calling to those near him to follow. Inspired by his example, the color-bearers and officers all along the front sprang out, and, without more firing, the men charged at the *pas de course*, capturing all that remained of the enemy. The history of the war presents no equally splendid illustration of personal magnetism. Warren led the van of the rushing lines; his horse was fatally shot within a few feet of the breastworks, and he himself was in imminent peril, when a gallant officer, Colonel Richardson of the Seventh Wisconsin, sprang between him and the enemy, receiving a severe wound, but shielding from hurt the person of his loved commander.

A charge of the cavalry completed the rout, and the remnants of the divisions of Pickett and Johnson fled westward from Five Forks, pursued for many miles, and until long after dark, by the mounted divisions of Merritt and McKenzie. The trophies of the day included many colors and guns and above five thousand prisoners, of which number three thousand two

hundred and forty-four were taken by the Fifth Corps. Brilliant as the victory was, it was won without great sacrifice of life, the losses of the cavalry being but a few hundred, and those of the infantry six hundred and thirty-four killed and wounded.*

No sooner had the sound of musketry died away at the Five Forks, than from the multitudinous throats of all the guns that studded Grant's lines before Petersburg there opened a prodigious clamor, and the darkness of night was illumined by the lurid light of hundreds of bursting shells and bombs. It was a pæan to victory; but still more a prelude of what was yet to come.

The action at Five Forks had simplified, not solved the problem. Lee's right, wrenched violently from his centre —the troops captive or rushing wildly westward—would trouble no more. But the Confederate lines encircling Petersburg from the Appomattox to Hatcher's Run, were still intact. This was Lee's centre in the general relations of all the points he aimed to defend, while his left was the front that covered Richmond from the Union force threatening assault on the north side of the James. But as, strangely enough, Longstreet, who commanded on the Richmond side, had not discovered how greatly the enemy in his front had been reduced, still retained two divisions on that side of the James, the force immediately defending Petersburg was reduced to two incomplete divisions. Upon this General Grant, on learning the success at Five Forks, ordered an attack to be made by the corps of Wright, Parke, and Ord, the following morn-

* After the close of the action, General Sheridan, for some reason as yet unexplained, relieved General Warren from duty, and assigned General Griffin to the command of the Fifth Corps. In saying that this act is "as yet unexplained," it will hardly be interpreted in the sense that I am unaware of the reasons stated by General Sheridan in his official report, but that these reasons are wholly inadequate to justify that officer's conduct. It is needless here to enter into the discussion of this painful question; for General Warren has exhausted it in a *brochure*, lately published, under the title of "An Account of the Fifth Army Corps at the Battle of Five Forks."

ing. Being apprehensive, however, that Lee might during the night withdraw this force and fall upon Sheridan in his isolated position, he ordered Miles' division of Humphreys' corps to his support, and commanded all the guns in the Petersburg lines to be opened in a general bombardment. This, beginning at nightfall of the 1st, was kept up till four A. M. of the 2d April.

At earliest dawn of Sunday, the 2d, the assault was opened, from the Appomattox to Hatcher's Run, by the troops of Parke, Wright, and Ord. Parke on the right, with the Ninth Corps, carried the outer line of intrenchments; but the position of that corps confronted that portion of the Confederate defences longest held and most strongly fortified, and after the outer line had been penetrated, the Confederates were found holding an inner cordon of works, from which Parke could not force them.

Wright, with the Sixth Corps, next on the left of the Ninth, assaulting at four A. M., carried every thing before him. Having attained the Boydton plankroad, he swept to the left down the Confederate intrenchments, capturing many guns and several thousand prisoners. He was closely followed by two divisions of Ord's command, and continued on until he met the other division of Ord's that had succeeded in forcing the lines near Hatcher's Run, when the united forces swung to the right and proceeded by the Boydton plankroad towards Petersburg.

When these successes were reported, Humphreys, holding the Union left to the west of Hatcher's Run, advanced with two divisions of the Second Corps (the divisions of Hays and Mott) and stormed and carried a redoubt in his front. Seeing this lost, the Confederates abandoned this position, and Humphreys moved up the Boydton plankroad and connected with the left of the Sixth Corps. The other of Humphreys' divisions, under Miles, pursued whatever debris of the enemy remained west of Hatcher's Run. This force retreated northward to Sutherland Station, on the Southside Railroad, where it was overtaken by Miles, who in a spirited charge dis-

lodged and defeated it, taking two guns and six hundred prisoners.

On reaching the lines immediately around Petersburg, a part of Ord's command, under General Gibbon, began an assault with the view to break through to the city. The attack was directed against Forts Gregg and Alexander, two strong, inclosed works, the most salient and commanding south of Petersburg. The former of these redoubts was manned by Harris's Mississippi Brigade, numbering two hundred and fifty men; and this handful of skilled marksmen conducted the defence with such intrepidity, that Gibbon's forces, surging repeatedly against it, were each time thrown back. At length, at seven A. M., a renewed charge carried the work; but not till its two hundred and fifty defenders had been reduced to thirty; and it is calculated that each of these riflemen struck down at least two assailants, for Gibbon's loss was above five hundred men. The other fort found no such defenders, and readily fell. This being accomplished, the Union line of investment was drawn close around the city.

The result of these operations was, that the Confederates, having lost most of their outer system of defences, were pressed back to a chain of works immediately around Petersburg. But as they had here a short and strong line, with their left resting on the Appomattox on the east of Petersburg and their right on the same river on the west side, they still protected the city, and the Union force, weighty as it was, found it impossible to dislodge them. Lee, indeed, was even able to make, in the old style, an offensive sally or two, for about ten A. M. a slight re-enforcement came to him. Longstreet having at length discovered that the force that for many days had confronted him on the north side of the James was little more than a mask, drew therefrom several of his brigades, and at the hour named reached Petersburg, accompanied by Benning's brigade of Field's division. This increase of his force, slight though it was, together with the protracted resistance offered by Fort Gregg, enabled Lee to establish what of force remained to him in such wise as would best avail for

the defence of the city General A. P Hill then pushed forward the division of Heth on the Confederate left, in an effort to regain some commanding ground held by the Ninth Corps. The attack was made with such vigor and pressed so heavily on that corps, that it was with difficulty it could maintain its ground, and the garrison of the defences of City Point had to be ordered up to its support. This may be accounted the last blow struck by the Army of Northern Virginia while covering Richmond; and it is noteworthy that in its execution fell General A. P Hill, who in all the operations that from first to last filled up the four years' defence of the Confederate capital, had borne a most distinguished part.

In thus maintaining a stubborn attitude of resistance at the threshold of Petersburg, Lee had now but one thought, which was to hold his ground until the oncoming of night should enable him to put into execution the ulterior design he had formed. This design was communicated to the Richmond authorities in a message sent by Lee about eleven o'clock of the forenoon of that same Sunday. It was received by Mr. Davis while worshipping at the church of Saint Paul's; and those who, as he passed out, marked his countenance (on which it seemed the burden of an additional score of years had in a moment fallen), knew that message could bear nothing but tidings of direful import.

It announced Lee's purpose of that night abandoning Petersburg and Richmond.

V.

THE RETREAT AND PURSUIT.

It may well be supposed that the purpose of the hardy captain who designed to "make an end of it before going back," was not relaxed, but rather intensified by the events of the past two days; and forecasting what must be the next

move of his antagonist, Grant, on the night of the 2d, had already begun his dispositions to checkmate him.

To Lee there was but one line of retreat that led anywhere but to destruction. This was up the Appomattox, parallel with the Southside Railroad, and westward to the Danville line. But the Fifth Union Corps was already at Sutherland's Station on the Southside Railroad, ten miles west of Petersburg, and Sheridan, with the cavalry, on the night of the 2d bivouacked at Ford's, ten miles still further to the west. These moves compelled Lee, at the outset, to make his retreat by the north bank of the Appomattox, and threw him upon the exterior line.

To the Union force set free for pursuit, in case that should be the order, was added, on the night of the 2d, the Second Corps under Humphreys, to whom was at the same time sent a ponton-train. The Sixth and Ninth corps and Ord's command, meantime, held their close-drawn lines of investment around Petersburg, while from the north side of the James Weitzel watched Richmond.

But not all the wary eyes of peering pickets served to discover what was that night passing in the Confederate camp. When the long twilight of that May-day Sunday had faded out in the west, and deep darkness had settled down over the sleeping Union host, a silent withdrawal was begun from the whole Confederate front. The Petersburg force, retiring noiselessly through the town, filed over to the north bank of the Appomattox. Thence marching northward to Chesterfield Courthouse, midway between Petersburg and Richmond, it was joined by the division holding the front of Bermuda Hundred. At the same time whatever force remained on the Richmond side was drawn in, and moved southward to Chesterfield Courthouse, when the whole Confederate army headed westward. The evacuation was conducted with wonderful address; and the march being pushed vigorously all night, the Army of Northern Virginia, now reduced to twenty-five thousand men, had by dawn put sixteen miles between it and Petersburg.

It is said by those who were with the Confederate commander, that his spirits were unusually light and cheerful on the morning of the 3d. "I have got my army safe out of its breastworks," said he, "and, in order to follow me, my enemy must abandon his lines, and can derive no further benefit from his railroads or the James River." What then might he now reasonably hope for? He could certainly not dream of the triumph of his cause. That is not to be supposed. But he might hope so to conduct affairs as to obtain advantageous terms of peace for the Confederacy. And it is certain that he did expect to effect a successful retreat—to escape entirely from the toils of his antagonist—to unite with the army under Johnston, and then so to act as to elicit good overtures not only for the capitulation of his army, but for the settlement of a basis of peace, which, the Confederate government being fugitive, he took it upon himself to negotiate should opportunity be afforded. How this hope was dashed to the ground, as well by unforeseen misfortunes that befell Lee as by the prodigious vigor with which Grant pushed the pursuit, will appear in the course of this narrative. It is now necessary to look to the dispositions and movements of the Union columns.

When in the gray dawn of Monday, April 3d, the skirmishers advanced from the lines before Petersburg, the city was found to be evacuated. At the same time the Union force on the lines confronting Richmond from the north side of the James was startled by a clamorous uproar, and the sky was seen to be lit up with a lurid glare. Surmising the meaning of this direful blazon, General Weitzel threw forward a cavalry party that, entering the city without let, planted its guidons on the Capitol.

Thus Richmond fell! Marvellous as had been the one year's defence of the Confederate capital, its fall was not less strange. Occupied, not captured, Richmond, to gain which such hecatombs of lives had been sacrificed, was at length given up by the civil authorities to a body of forty troopers!

The explanation of the portentous sounds and sights was soon learned. To the rear-guard, under Ewell, had been left the last duty of blowing up the iron-clad vessels in the James and the bridges across that river; and it was the noise of the explosions that first announced to General Weitzel that Richmond was given up. But the Confederate officials, in addition to this work of destruction (which cannot be condemned on the score that it was not warranted by the rules of war), adopted a measure shocking to every sense of humanity. It appears that the warehouses of Richmond contained great store of government tobacco, and the cruel and senseless order was given to fire these—as though it were possible with impunity to play with the devouring element! The flames, spreading to the neighboring buildings, soon involved a wide and widening area; and, though the Union force, on its entry, labored to put out the fire it could not be subdued until the heart of the city, including all the business section, was laid in ashes. It was amid such scenes that Richmond fell, with the smoke of the torment of the Confederacy ascending to heaven, while far away all that remained of the Confederate army hastened beyond the sunset.

But little did Grant reck of Richmond; and already, since morning revealed the flight of the Confederates, he had been pressing to the uttermost the march of his columns. Pursued and pursuers fared forth by parallel lines—Lee by the north side of the Appomattox, Grant by the south bank. Let us see whither led all this mad haste.

The Danville Railroad, Lee's line of retreat, runs southwest from Richmond, and is intersected by the Southside or Lynchburg Railroad, which runs westward from Petersburg, at Burkesville, which is fifty-eight miles from Richmond by the former road, and fifty-two miles from Petersburg by the latter road. Burkesville, therefore, was to Lee a strategic point of the first importance, for if he should be anticipated in its possession, he would be forced off the direct Danville line, and

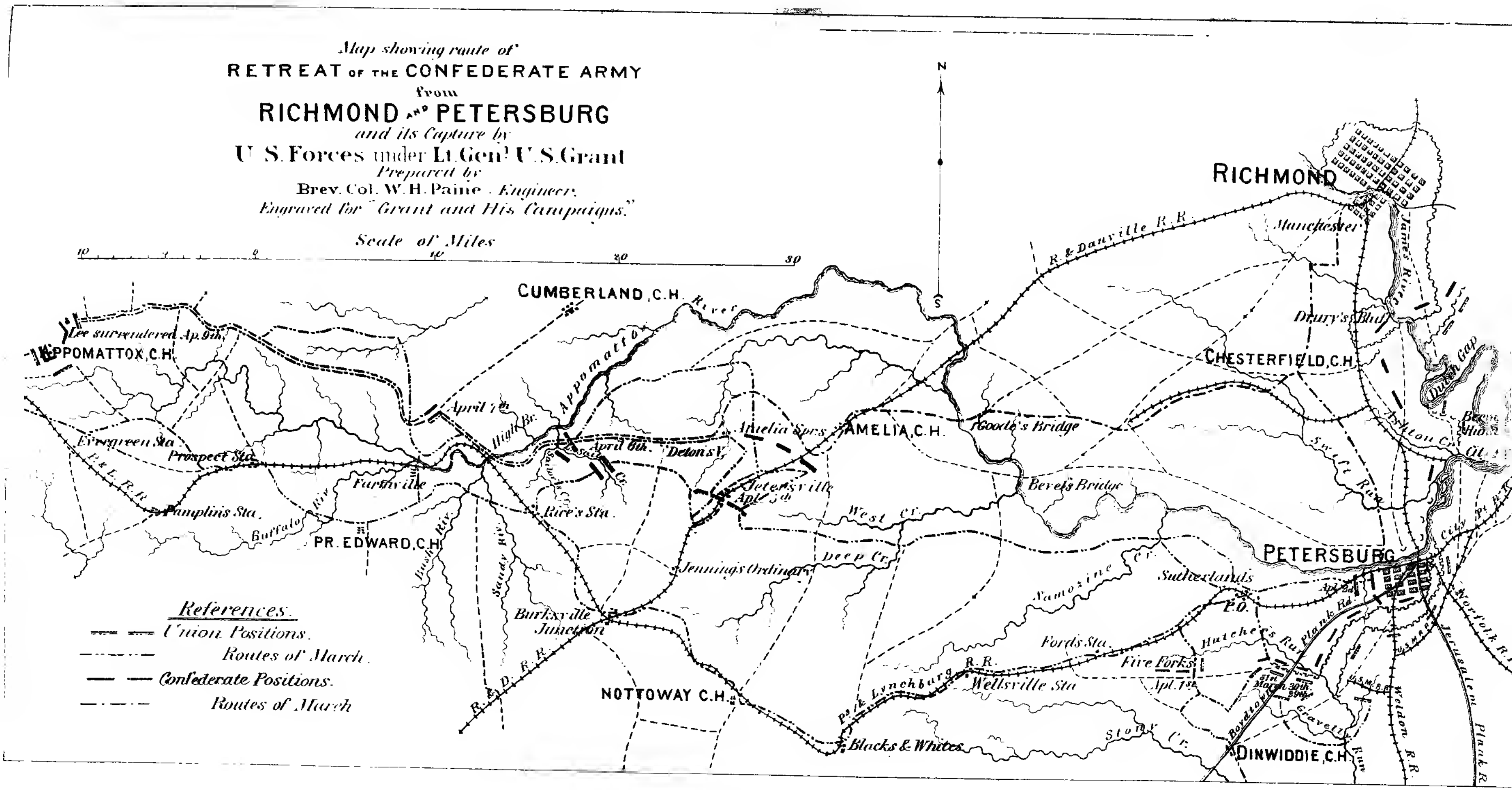
could only recover it, if at all, by a great detour to the west. This, accordingly, was his first objective.

The march of the Union forces was conducted by two lines: the troops of the Army of the James, under General Ord, by the line of the Southside or Lynchburg Railroad, towards Burkesville, and Sheridan, with the cavalry and Fifth Corps, followed by the Second and Sixth corps of the Army of the Potomac, by routes near the Appomattox, to strike the Danville Railroad north of Burkesville.

Lee's march led by the north bank of the Appomattox for thirty miles west, when it was necessary to cross that stream at Goode's bridge in order to strike the Danville road at Amelia Courthouse, thirty-eight miles west of Richmond and Petersburg. Pushing the advance vigorously during the 3d, Lee next day reached Amelia Courthouse. Here a dire and unlooked-for anguish befell him.

When Lee determined to abandon Petersburg and Richmond, he dispatched orders that large supplies of commissary and quartermasters' stores should be sent forward from Danville to Amelia Courthouse, there to await the arrival of his columns. When, however, on Sunday afternoon, the loaded train of cars reached Amelia Courthouse, the officer in charge was met by an order from the Richmond authorities to bring on the train to Richmond, it being the design to use the cars in the transportation of the personel and property of the Confederate government. Interpreting this order in the sense that the train and its contents should be taken to Richmond, the officer, without unloading the stores at Amelia Courthouse, carried on cars, freight and all; and the rations on which Lee had depended for the subsistence of his army were consumed in the general conflagration of Richmond!

Such were the agonizing tidings that met the Confederate commander on his arrival at Amelia Courthouse; and one can well imagine how, from that moment, all his hopes were dashed to the ground. Lee had fairly counted, that as Grant had, for the purpose of rapid pursuit, broken up his force into



Map showing route of
RETREAT OF THE CONFEDERATE ARMY
from
RICHMOND AND PETERSBURG
and its Capture by
U. S. Forces under Lt. Genl. U. S. Grant
Prepared by
Brev. Col. W. H. Paine. Engineer.
Engraved for "Grant and His Campaigns."
Scale of Miles
10
0
10
20
30
N
S
RICHMOND
Manchester
R. & Danville R. R.
James River
Drury's Bluff
Dutch Gap
CHESTERFIELD, C.H.
Swift Run
PETERSBURG
Sutherlands
P.O.
Namozine Cr.
Ford's Sta.
Hatcher's Run
Five Forks
Apl. 1st
Wellsville Sta.
Lynchburg R.R.
Blacks & Whites
Stony Cr.
DINWIDDIE, C.H.
Gravelly Run
Weldon R.R.
Jerusalem Plank R.
Norfolk R.R.
City Pt. R.R.
Boydton Plank Rd.
Plank Rd.
Bevel's Bridge
Goode's Bridge
AMELIA, C.H.
Amelia Sprs.
Jetersville
West Cr.
Deep Cr.
Jennings Ordinary
Deton's
April 6th.
Rice's Sta.
Sailor's Cr.
High Br.
April 7th.
Appomattox River
CUMBERLAND, C.H.
Farmville
Burkesville Junction
R. & D. R. R.
NOTTOWAY C.H.
Sandy Riv.
Bush Riv.
PR. EDWARD, C.H.
Buffalo Riv.
Pamplins Sta.
Prospect Sta.
Evergreen Sta.
P. & L. R. R.
Lee surrendered Ap. 9th.
APPOMATTOX, C.H.
References.
Union Positions.
Routes of March.
Confederate Positions.
Routes of March.

several bodies, an opportunity would present itself to fall upon these fractions in detail, should his retreat become seriously endangered. But, to accomplish this, it was necessary that he should have his whole army, now not much above twenty thousand men, well in hand. This, in the absence of rations, was no longer possible; for, in order to keep life in what force remained to him, it became incumbent on him to break up a moiety of it into foraging parties.

At Amelia Courthouse, where Lee had arrived the morning of the 4th, he was compelled to remain during the whole of that and the following day; and this forced delay gave Sheridan, who, with the cavalry and the Fifth Corps, was pushing the advance impetuously far in the van of the remainder of the army, time to strike in upon the Confederate line of retreat. This he did the afternoon of the 4th, at Jetersville, on the Danville Railroad, seven miles southwest of Amelia Courthouse.

Thus headed off from the direct line of retreat, there was for Lee but one alternative—to fall upon Sheridan's isolated force in the attempt to overwhelm it and recover the Danville route, or, by doubling on his track, take up an eccentric and exterior line. But, in reality, the first course was, under the circumstances, out of the question. Sheridan, indeed, has animadverted upon Lee's want of activity here. "It seems to me," says he, "that this was the only chance the Army of Northern Virginia had to save itself, which might have been done had General Lee promptly attacked and driven back the comparatively small force opposed to him, and pursued his march to Burkesville Junction."* But it is not clear what this distinguished officer means by a "*comparatively* small force." Sheridan had with him at Jetersville above eighteen thousand excellent cavalry and infantry, well intrenched; while he himself reported Lee's entire strength at Amelia Courthouse as twenty thousand; and it has been seen that half of this force was broken up

* Sheridan: Report of Operations.

into foraging parties. In fact, to attempt *escape* was all that now remained to Lee.

Late in the afternoon of the 5th, General Meade, with the Second and Sixth corps of the Army of the Potomac, joined Sheridan at Jetersville, where, expecting attack, he had held his force intrenched since the previous day Lee was still at Amelia Courthouse. Meanwhile, Sheridan had been operating with his cavalry well to his left, to watch if Lee should make any attempt to escape by that flank. On the morning of the 5th, Brigadier-General Davies, with a mounted force, advanced to Paine's Cross-roads, where he struck a train of a hundred and eighty wagons, escorted by a body of Confederate cavalry, which he defeated, destroying the wagons and capturing five pieces of artillery and a number of prisoners. Gregg's and Smith's brigades of the Second Cavalry Division were sent out to support Davies, and some heavy fighting ensued—the Confederates having sent a considerable force of infantry to cut off the latter; but the attempt was thwarted.

The night of the 5th, Lee moved from Amelia. His only hope now was to make a race to Farmville (west thirty-five miles), there cross the Appomattox once more, and, by destroying the bridges after him, escape into the mountains beyond Lynchburg. When, therefore, on the morning of the 6th, the whole Army of the Potomac, which, the night previous, had been concentrated at Jetersville, moved northward towards Amelia to give battle to the Confederates, it was found that Lee had slipped past. The direction of the corps was then changed: the Sixth Corps moved from the right to the left; the Second Corps was ordered to move by Deatonsville; and the Fifth and Sixth corps to move in parallel directions on the right and left. As Lee was retreating by the Deatonsville route, this disposition of the pursuing forces placed one column in his rear on the same road by which he was moving, a second column by a parallel route to the south, and a third column by a parallel route to the north. Meanwhile, the Army of the James, which had been pushing its

march by the line of the Lynchburg Railroad, had reached Burkesville; and on the morning of the 6th General Ord was directed towards Farmville. In order, if possible, to reach and destroy the bridges near that place, Ord sent forward a light column, consisting of two regiments of infantry and a squadron of cavalry, under Brigadier General Theodore Read. This force met the head of Lee's column near Farmville, and Read heroically attacked it in the effort to detain the Confederate column until the main force should be able to make up with it. That gallant officer sacrificed his life in the execution of this duty, and his command was overwhelmed; but the attack served the intended purpose, and so delayed the movements of the enemy, that Ord had time to arrive with the Army of the James. Upon this, the Confederate force immediately intrenched itself.

Sheridan, who had now with him only the cavalry, formed the van of the column that was marching on the southern parallel route; and he was deploying all the resources of an energy that seemed to grow hotter and hotter with the chase, to head off the hunted prey. Near Deatonsville, that same 6th, he struck in upon the Confederate wagon-train escorted by a formidable force of infantry and cavalry. To wrest this prize from its guardians Sheridan made admirable dispositions. He ordered Crook's division to attack the train, and if the covering force proved too strong, one of the divisions would, while Crook held fast to and pressed the enemy, pass him and attack a point further on; and this division was ordered to do the same, and so on alternately. This method of action would, he judged, enable him finally to strike some weak point.

This result was obtained just south of Sailor's Creek, a small tributary of the Appomattox that, running northward, empties into that stream a few miles east of Farmville. Custer's division gained the road, and the divisions of Crook and Devin coming up to its support, four hundred wagons were destroyed, and sixteen pieces of artillery and many prisoners were captured. Ewell's corps, which was following behind the train,

was thus cut off from its line of retreat. To detain this force as long as possible, so that the infantry might have time to come up, was now Sheridan's desire, and with this view he ordered a mounted charge, which was executed in a very spirited manner by one of his brigades under Colonel Stagg.

When the head of column of the Sixth Corps came in sight the Confederates began retiring, whereupon Seymour's division was directed to carry the road. This being done, the Confederates fell back slowly, skirmishing and turning with such sharp and sudden sallies of resistance, that a halt had to be called to get up Wheaton's division of the Sixth Corps. This took position on the left of Seymour, whereupon a renewed advance was made, and the Confederates were driven until the lines of the Sixth Corps reached Sailor's Creek. Then from the north bank could be descried the cavalry on the high ground above the creek and south of it, and the long lines of smoke from the burning wagons beyond. But even while thus environed, these men showed they could still exact a price before yielding; and when an advance was made by a part of the Sixth Corps, they delivered so deadly a fire that a portion of that veteran line bent and broke under it. But the numbers were too unequal, too overwhelming; and when a simultaneous assault was made by the Sixth Corps in front and the cavalry in flank and rear, Ewell's troops, finding themselves surrounded, threw down their arms in token of surrender. The captures included nearly all that remained of the corps of that officer, with Lieutenant-General Ewell himself and four other general officers.

The decisive character of this result was largely due to the energetic movements of the Second Corps, which, moving to the right, had pressed the Confederates closely in a rear-guard fight all day till night, when it had attained a position near the mouth of Sailor's Creek. Here the Confederates were so crowded upon, that a large train was captured and many hundreds were taken prisoners. The trophies of the Second Corps included, in addition several pieces, of artillery and thirteen flags.

Lee, meanwhile, with the relics of his army, continued the retreat during the night, and passed to the north bank of the Appomattox by bridges near Farmville.

Such are the mere bald facts that, thus far, marked the retreat and pursuit. But it would need other colors in which truly to paint that terrible race for life; and one would have to seek its like in what befell upon the snowy wastes of Muscovy in the winter of 1812.

The Confederates began the retreat with but one ration, and when no supplies were met at Amelia Courthouse, they were reduced to such scant store as could be collected from the poor and almost exhausted region through which they passed. This resource, moreover, grew more and more precarious, for the area of the foragers was so restricted by the clouds of enterprising Union cavalry, that they could collect less and less. Those men were fortunate who had in their pockets a few handfuls of corn which they might parch by the wayside; but many had naught wherewithal to assuage the pangs of hunger save the buds and twigs of spring that, with its exuberant bourgeon, seemed to mock the sere and desolate winter of their fortunes. The misery of the famished troops during the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th of April, passes all experience of military anguish since the retreat from the banks of the Beresina. "Towards evening of the 5th," says an eye-witness, "and all day long upon the 6th, hundreds of men dropped from exhaustion, and thousands let fall their muskets from inability to carry them any further. The scenes of the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th were of a nature which can be apprehended in its vivid reality only by men who are thoroughly familiar with the harrowing details of war."

While the sufferings of the men were thus severe, those of the horses and mules were even keener; for of forage there was none, and the grass had not yet sprouted. Of course, in this condition of the draught-animals the locomotion of the trains and artillery could be but slow. Moreover, the long lines of wagons, filling miles of the road, frequently cut in

upon the route of the infantry columns, delaying them for half a day at a time: so that, from this and other reasons, the march had to be mainly conducted by night, which added the want of rest to the sum of miseries accumulating fast and faster on the hapless host of fugitives. Dark divisions, sinking in the woods for a few hours' repose, would hear suddenly the boom of hostile guns and the clatter of the hoofs of the ubiquitous cavalry, and they had to up and hasten off as fast as their wearied limbs would carry them. Thus pressed upon on all sides, driven like sheep before prowling wolves, with blazing wagons in front and rear, amid hunger, fatigue, and sleeplessness, continuing day after day, they fared towards the setting sun—

"Such resting found the soles of unblest feet!"

VI.

CLOSING SCENES.

When, on the night of the 6th, the Army of Northern Virginia had put the Appomattox between it and its pursuers, a group of the chief officers met around the bivouac-fire to take counsel together touching their fortunes. General Lee alone was not of the number.

The result of the interchange of views was to reduce the possibilities of the situation to three lines of conduct. 1. To disband, allowing the troops to make their way as best they might to some fixed rallying point. 2. To abandon the trains and cut their way through the opposing lines. 3. To surrender.

But it was soon seen that, in reality, two of these courses were excluded. To disband would be to give up all; for there was little likelihood that the troops could ever be rallied, while their dispersion over the country would necessarily entail unnumbered ills upon the inhabitants. To cut their way through was more easy to talk about than to do;

and even if they succeeded in effecting this purpose, the army, without a train or artillery or *materiel*, would lose all organization, and must starve. It resulted that there seemed to be no alternative but surrender. This was the voice of the council; and General Pendleton was appointed to communicate the conclusion to General Lee.

But the Confederate commander did not think such extremity was yet upon him; or, rather, he did not think he could with honor surrender until he should be compelled to surrender; and this had not yet been. Moreover, all deliberation was cut short by an ominous outburst of sound which told that the hunter was again upon the track of the hunted. When the whole of the Confederate column had filed across the Appomattox, near Farmville, which was not till towards dawn of the 7th, the bridges were fired to prevent pursuit. But the Second Corps, under Humphreys, taking up an early pursuit, came up with the Confederates at High Bridge, six miles east of Farmville. The rear-guard was overtaken just as it had fired the wagon-road bridge, and as the second span of the railroad bridge was burning; but Humphreys succeeded in saving the wagon-road bridge—a matter of great importance, as the Appomattox was unfordable. A considerable force of the Confederates was observed drawn up in a strong position on the heights on the opposite bank to dispute the passage, while the bridge was held by skirmishers. These were, however, quickly driven off, and the Second Corps crossed, Barlow's division leading. Artillery was put in position to cover an attack; but this was unnecessary, for the Confederate force retired. A redoubt, forming the bridge-head on the south bank, was blown up as the Union troops approached, eight guns being abandoned to the pursuers, as were also ten others on the north bank. High Bridge was saved with the loss of four spans.

Humphreys then took up the pursuit, with the division of Miles and De Trobriand, on the Old Stage road leading to Appomattox Courthouse, while Barlow's division was directed on Farmville, distant three miles. Barlow found this place in

possession of a considerable force of the enemy, that was burning the bridges there, and covering a wagon-train moving towards Lynchburg; but on Barlow's approach it abandoned the place, destroying one hundred and thirty wagons, and rejoined the main body of Lee's army.

This Humphreys found intrenched in a strong position four or five miles north of Farmville, covering the stage and plank roads to Lynchburg. It proved to be too formidable for a front attack—the ground being open and sloping up gradually to a crest about a thousand yards distant, which was covered with intrenchments and batteries. An attempt was then made to take it in flank, but the Confederate flanks were found to extend both on the right and left beyond the line of Humphreys' divisions, and it became manifest that all that remained of the Army of Northern Virginia was present. Barlow's division was then ordered up. Meanwhile Humphreys, having extended his right the length of one division, ordered Miles to make an attack with three regiments; but these met a complete repulse, suffering the loss of above six hundred in killed and wounded. It was too late to renew operations when Barlow arrived, and during the night Lee again retreated.

While these events were in progress, Sheridan dispatched two of his mounted divisions to Prince Edward Courthouse, and a third, that of Crook, to Farmville. The bridges having been burnt at this point, the horsemen crossed with great difficulty by wading; though the Sixth Corps, which was moving on the same line, was so delayed that it was not able to make the passage until night. Crook struck a train on the north side of Appomattox; but it was too well defended by infantry; and after a sharp skirmish the cavalry was driven off, General Gregg, commanding one of the brigades, being captured.

The night of the 7th General Lee received the following communication:

APRIL 7, 1865.

GENERAL:—The result of the last week must convince you of the hopelessness of further resistance on the part of the Army of Northern Virginia in this

struggle. I feel that it is so, and regard it as my duty to shift from myself the responsibility of any further effusion of blood, by asking of you the surrender of that portion of the Confederate States army known as the Army of Northern Virginia.

U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant-General.

GENERAL R. E. LEE.

It was at Farmville that General Grant wrote this message, and he was prompted by the belief that "General Lee's chances of escape were now utterly hopeless." Lee indited his reply that same night, but before General Grant received it, the Confederate commander had again put a long night's march between his army and its pursuers. It was in these words:

GENERAL:—I have received your note of this date. Though not entertaining the opinion you express on the hopelessness of further resistance on the part of the Army of Northern Virginia, I reciprocate your desire to avoid useless effusion of blood, and, therefore, before considering your proposition, ask the terms you will offer on condition of its surrender.

ROBERT E. LEE, General.

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL U. S. GRANT.

To this General Grant immediately replied:

APRIL 8, 1865.

GENERAL:—Your note of last evening, in reply to mine of the same date, asking the condition on which I will accept the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, is just received. In reply, I would say that *peace* being my great desire, there is but one condition I would insist upon, namely: that the men and officers surrendered shall be disqualified for taking up arms again against the Government of the United States until properly exchanged. I will meet you, or will designate officers to meet any officers you might name for the same purpose, at any point agreeable to you, for the purpose of arranging definitely the terms upon which the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia will be received.

U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant-General.

GENERAL R. E. LEE.

Meanwhile, Lee's night march of the 7th having again left the Union forces considerably behind, it was necessary to renew pursuit on the morning of the 8th.

The Second and Sixth corps of the Army of the Potomac

moved by the north bank of the Appomattox, while Sheridan advanced by the south bank, and, followed by Ord's command and the Fifth Corps, struck out for Appomattox station on the Lynchburg Railroad. Lee's line of retreat was now by the narrow neck of land betwixt the Appomattox and the James. If its outlet towards Lynchburg was closed, all was lost for Lee. Sheridan was hastening to close this outlet.

Desperate as the situation was, Lee, determined to put the best face on matters, with a kind of grim humor, wrote, but flying as he wrote:

APRIL 8, 1865.

GENERAL:—I received at a late hour your note of to-day. In mine of yesterday I did not intend to propose the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia, but to ask the terms of your proposition. To be frank, *I do not think the emergency has arisen to call for the surrender of this army;* but, as the restoration of peace should be the sole object of all, I desired to know whether your proposals would lead to that end. I cannot, therefore, meet you with a view to surrender the Army of Northern Virginia, but as far as your proposal may effect the Confederate States forces under my command, and tend to the restoration of peace, I should be pleased to meet you at ten A. M., to-morrow, on the old stage road to Richmond, between the picket lines of the two armies.

R. E. LEE, General.

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL GRANT.

This note Grant received about midnight, and next morning he replied in these terms:

APRIL 9, 1865.

GENERAL:—Your note of yesterday is received. I have no authority to treat on the subject of peace: the meeting proposed for ten A. M. to-day could lead to no good. I will state, however, general, that I am equally anxious for peace with yourself, and the whole North entertains the same feeling. The terms upon which peace can be had are well understood. By the South laying down their arms they will hasten that most desirable event, save thousands of human lives, and hundreds of millions of property not yet destroyed. Seriously hoping that all our difficulties may be settled without the loss of another life, I subscribe myself, &c.,

U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant-General.

GENERAL R. E. LEE.

But, before Lee received this, the time for parley had

passed. The evening of the 8th, after a march of above thirty miles, Sheridan reached Appomattox station on the Lynchburg Railroad, five miles south of Appomattox Courthouse. The rear-guard of Lee's army had just arrived, and four trains of cars, loaded with supplies for the starving Confederates, were approaching. Sheridan, by throwing a force in rear of the trains, captured them, and then assailing the vanguard, drove it back to Appomattox Courthouse. Here he planted his force directly in front of Lee and on his line of retreat, and resolved to hold fast for the night, knowing that the Army of the James would join him in the morning, whilst the Army of the Potomac would strike the rear of the Confederates.

But one escape now remained to Lee, which was to cut his way through Sheridan's lines, and this he attempted at dawn. The once proud array of the Army of Northern Virginia now presented this sorry spectacle. A thin line of battle, made up of Gordon's troops in front; another scant line composed of the wreck of Longstreet's corps in rear—in all about eight thousand men. Between the two were the *débris* of the wagon-train and the gaunt figures of some thousands of unarmed stragglers, too weak to carry their muskets. Lee sent orders to Gordon to cut his way through at all hazards. This was immediately begun with wonderful impetuosity, and the cavalry, that had dismounted to resist the attack, found itself forced back. At this juncture Sheridan personally arrived from Appomattox Station, whither he had been to hasten the march of the Army of the James. That officer immediately directed his troopers to fall back gradually, resisting the enemy, so as to give the infantry time to come up and form its lines. This was soon effected; and the moment the Confederates caught sight of the advancing bayonets, they ceased their pressure and began to give ground. Then Sheridan, sounding the order to mount, dashed with his cavalry and placed it on the enemy's left flank. He was just about to charge on the trains and confused mass, when one bearing a white flag emerged from the Confederate lines with a letter

from General Lee, requesting a suspension of hostilities looking to a surrender, and an interview with General Grant. This meeting was had at a dwelling in Appomattox Courthouse, where the rival chieftains, sitting together at a deal table, reduced to form the act that put out of existence the Army of Northern Virginia. The agreement was embodied in the two following papers:

APPOMATTOX COURTHOUSE, VA.,
April 9, 1865.

GENERAL:—In accordance with the substance of my letter to you of the 8th instant, I propose to receive the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia on the following terms—to wit: Rolls of all the officers and men to be made in duplicate, one copy to be given to an officer to be designated by me, the other to be retained by such officer or officers as you may designate. The officers to give their individual paroles not to take up arms against the United States until properly exchanged; and each company or regimental commander to sign a like parole for the men of their commands. The arms, artillery, and public property to be packed and stacked, and turned over to the officers appointed by me to receive them. This will not embrace the side-arms of the officers, nor their private horses or baggage. This done, each officer and man will be allowed to return to his home, not to be disturbed by United States authority so long as they observe their paroles and the laws in force where they may reside.

U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant-General.

GENERAL R. E. LEE.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA,
April 9, 1865.

GENERAL:—I have received your letter of this date containing the terms of the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia as proposed by you. As they are substantially the same as those expressed in your letter of the 8th instant, they are accepted. I will proceed to designate the proper officers to carry the stipulations into effect.

R. E. LEE, General.

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL U. S. GRANT.

These terms were, on the part of General Grant, liberal and magnanimous; and that officer displayed throughout the transaction soldierly delicacy.

In the course of the afternoon, the result of this momentous interview became known to both armies, and then all the in-

tense, yet strangely diverse emotions which the intelligence was calculated to evoke, broke out in manifestations that pass all words of description. On the Union side there was joy unmixed and unrestrained—the joy of men that had gone through great tribulation, the joy of an army that, often unfortunate and ever unappreciated, saw at length unparalleled labors crowned by illustrious success. On the Confederate side there was a kind of joy, too—such sad joy as men feel when a long agony is over. Yet there could not fail to be deep anguish in their hearts; and this burst forth when General Lee rode through the ranks. "Whole lines of battle," says an eye-witness, "rushed up to their beloved old chief, and, choking with emotion, struggled with each other to wring him once more by the hand. Men who had fought throughout the war, and knew what the agony and humiliation of that moment must be to him, strove with a refinement of unselfishness and tenderness which he alone could fully appreciate, to lighten his burden and mitigate his pain. With tears pouring down both cheeks, General Lee at length commanded voice enough to say: 'Men, we have fought through the war together. I have done the best that I could for you.' Not an eye that looked on that scene was dry."

As the armies were enemies no longer, there was no need of martial array that night, nor fear of surprise, nor call to arms; but hostile devisement gave place to mutual helpfulness, and the victors shared their rations with the famished vanquished. In that supreme moment these men knew and respected each other. If the one army drank the joy of victory, and the other the bitter draught of defeat, it was a joy moderated by the recollection of the cost at which it had been purchased, and a defeat mollified by the consciousness of many triumphs. If the victors could recall a Malvern Hill, an Antietam, a Gettysburg, a Five Forks, the vanquished could recall a Manassas, a Fredericksburg, a Chancellorsville, a Cold Harbor. If at length the army of Northern Virginia fell before the massive power of the North, yet what vitality had it shown! How terrible had been the struggle! How many

hundreds of thousands of brave men had fallen before that result could be achieved! And this is the glory of the Army of the Potomac, that it brought to the ground the adversary which had ever been the head and front of the revolt, and that in crushing it, it quelled the rebellion. For so decisive upon the issue of the war was the surrender of that army, that the capitulation of all the other Confederate armies followed as a corollary therefrom, and the structure of the Confederacy, losing its key-stone, fell with a resounding crash.

Three days after the surrender, the Confederates marched by divisions to a designated spot in the neighborhood of Appomattox Courthouse, and there the troops stacked their arms and deposited their accoutrements. Less than eight thousand presented themselves with muskets in their hands; but the capitulation included, in addition, about eighteen thousand unarmed. Paroles were then distributed to the men, and the Army of Northern Virginia passed out of existence.

The Union troops then retraced their steps to Richmond, whence they were soon afterwards transferred to Washington. Here uniting with their illustrious sister-army of the West, they passed in review before the President and his cabinet, and the representatives of foreign powers, and an immense concourse of citizens, who with great rejoicings welcomed home the men whose valor had won the peace that now reigned over all the land. When the pageant was ended, the troops were mustered out of service, and the men, doffing the Union blue, were quietly reabsorbed into the body of society.

Thus the Army of the Potomac—that mighty creation of the patriotism of a free people, which for four years had waged a struggle unparalleled in its continuous intensity—ceased to be, closing its career in the world and the world's wars by the happy re-establishment of the Union for which it had fought.

What it belonged to me to say of this army is now completed. It is worthy of, and will doubtless find, a better historian. Yet, inadequate as is the performance, I am con-

scious of having wrought with a laudable aim—to wit: to speak the truth with candor, and to challenge for that army the recognition which is justly its due, but which has not yet been accorded it—the work it did and the circumstances under which it was done being both little understood.

APPENDIX.

Page 58. GENERALSHIP AT BULL RUN.

My statement in regard to the tactical errors at Bull Run, in regard to McDowell's attacking in fractions, is fully borne out by General Johnston, who also adds some very frank avowals of error on his own part.

"The [Confederate] Army of the Potomac, exclusive of the garrison of the intrenched position at Manassas Junction, amounted then to about nineteen thousand men of all arms. A large proportion of it was not engaged in the battle. This was a great fault on my part. When Bee's and Jackson's brigades were ordered to the vicinity of the Stone Bridge, those of Holmes and Early should have been moved to the left also, and placed in the interval on Bonham's left, if not then, certainly at nine o'clock, when a Federal column was seen turning our left; and when it seemed certain that General McDowell's great effort was to be made there, Bonham's, Longstreet's, Jones's, and Ewell's brigades, leaving a few regiments and their cavalry to impose on Miles's division, should have been hurried to the left to join in the battle.

"If the tactics of the Federals had been equal to their strategy, we should have been beaten. If, instead of being brought into action in detail, their troops had been formed in two lines with a proper reserve, and had assailed Bee and Jackson in that order, the two Southern brigades must have been swept from the field in a few minutes, or enveloped. General McDowell would have made such a formation, probably, had he not greatly under-estimated the strength of his enemy."—GEN. J. E. JOHNSTON: "Narrative," pages 56–57.

Page 59. QUESTION OF PURSUIT AFTER BULL RUN.

On this question General Johnston and Mr. Davis have in late years fought their battles over again, Mr. Davis stating that he was in favor of vigorous pursuit, and General Johnston not only reiterating his statement of the impossibility of an effectual following up of the Federal army, but asserting that Mr. Davis "*gave no orders, and expressed neither wish nor opinion on the subject, that ever came to my knowledge.*"

Regarding the following-up, General Johnston writes: "All the military conditions, we knew, forbade an attempt on Washington. The Confederate army was more disorganized by victory than that of the United States by defeat.

Besides this condition of our army the reasons for the course condemned by the non-combatant military critics were:

"The unfitness of our raw troops for marching or assailing intrenchments

"The want of the necessary supplies of food and ammunition, and means of transporting them. Until near August 10th, we never had rations for more than two days, and sometimes none, nor half enough ammunition for a battle.

"The fortifications upon which skilful engineers had been engaged since April, manned by at least fifty thousand Federal troops, half of whom had not suffered defeat.

"The Potomac, a mile wide, bearing United States vessels of war, the heavy guns of which commanded the wooden bridges and the Southern shore."—GEN. J. E. JOHNSTON: "Narrative," pages 60–61.

In regard to Mr. Davis's opinion of the propriety of pursuit, General Johnston quotes, from Alfriend's "Life of Jefferson Davis," these statements: "Mr. Davis was far from approving the inaction which followed Manassas. He confidently expected a different use of the victory. Indeed, before leaving Manassas, President Davis favored the most vigorous pursuit practicable. And that he contemplated immediate activity as a sequel of Manassas is a matter of indisputable record."

To these assertions General Johnston, as has been seen, gives a flat denial, adding: "He (Davis) expressed none of the 'views' and opinions ascribed to him in the biography, and gave me no orders for movements of troops, and discussed no matters concerning the army, except such as related to administration. The fact that he gave no instructions in relation to the employment of the army, nor orders to make any aggressive movement, nor even suggested such, proves conclusively that he thought none expedient, and was satisfied with the victory as it was."—GEN. J. E. JOHNSTON: "Narrative," page 64.

It is now time to introduce Mr. Jefferson Davis himself, who in his "Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government" (Vol. I., pp. 352–3), says: "At a late hour of the night, I had a conference with Generals Johnston and Beauregard; the Adjutant-General of the latter, Colonel Jordan, was present. When, after some preliminary conversation, I asked whether any troops had been sent in pursuit of the enemy, I was answered in the negative. Upon further inquiry as to what troops were in the best position for pursuit, and had been least fatigued during the day, General Bonham's brigade was named. I at once dictated an order for immediate pursuit."

In corroboration of this, Mr. Davis quotes Adjutant-General Jordan as follows: "Mr. Davis with much animation asserted the necessity for an urgent pursuit that night by Bonham," a statement which, however, it is difficult to reconcile with another in the same letter, namely: Mr. Davis did not "display the least disposition to interfere by opinion or authority touching what the Confederate forces should or should not do."

It is no less puzzling to understand the following endorsement by General Beauregard of Adjutant-General Jordan's letter from which the above extracts are made: "The account given herewith by General Jordan of what occurred there respecting further pursuit that night agrees with my own recollection."

Pages 102–3. GENERAL JOHNSTON'S THEORY OF DEFENDING RICHMOND.

General Johnston gives emphatic corroboration of the statement here made that he did not believe in the policy of making a stand at Yorktown any longer than would somewhat delay McClellan's advance, and in fact did not believe in the attempt to hold the Peninsula at all. He says: "I was convinced that we could do no more on the Peninsula than delay General McClellan's progress toward Richmond, and that, if he found our intrenchments too strong to be carried certainly and soon, he could pass around them by crossing York River. It seemed to me the more probable, however, that he would open York River to his vessels by demolishing our water-batteries, and passing us by water, unless tempted, by discovering the weakness of our unfinished works between Yorktown and the head of the inundations, to force his way through our line there." General Johnston also adds an interesting statement of his views as to the proper campaign for the defence of Richmond.

"Instead of only delaying the Federal army in its approach, I proposed that it should be encountered in front of Richmond, by one quite as numerous, formed by uniting there all the available forces of the Confederacy in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia, with those at Norfolk, on the Peninsula, and then near Richmond, including Smith's and Longstreet's divisions, which had arrived. The great army thus formed, surprising that of the United States by an attack when it was expecting to besiege Richmond would be almost certain to win; and the enemy, defeated a hundred miles from Fort Monroe, their place of refuge, could scarcely escape destruction. Such a victory would not only decide the campaign but the war, while the present plan could produce no decisive result."—GEN. JOHNSTON: "Narrative," page 113.

It seems, however, that in stating that General Lee agreed with General Johnston in pronouncing the peninsula untenable, I was in error. The latter officer distinctly states that in a council of war held early in April, General Lee opposed the plan proposed. "He thought," says Johnston, "that the peninsula had excellent fields of battle for a small army contending with a great one, and that we should for that reason make the contest with McClellan's army there. The President, who previously had expressed no opinion on the question, announced his decision in favor of General Lee's opinion" (p. 115).

This statement of General Lee's views is confirmed by Mr. Davis ("Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government," Vol. II., page 87).

General Johnston then adds: "The belief that events on the peninsula would soon compel the Confederate government to adopt my method of opposing the Federal army, reconciled me somewhat to the necessity of obeying the President's order" (p. 116).

Farther on (page 142), in narrating the events of Fair Oaks, where he was wounded, and after which General Lee took command of the Confederate army in Virginia, General Johnston remarks: "As soon as I had lost the command of the Army of Virginia by wounds in battle, my suggestion was adopted.

In that way the largest Confederate army that ever fought was formed in the month of June, by strengthening the forces near Richmond with troops from North and South Carolina and Georgia."

One cannot refuse General Johnston this little chuckle at the practical vindication of his plan. It may be worth noticing, in passing, that General Johnston states that the additions to Lee's army in the interim between his taking command and the operations attending the change of base (June 26th), amounted, in the aggregate, to 53,000 men. But other Southern writers, including Major Taylor, Colonel Marshall, and others, have each done his share in reducing this number, till under the arithmetical manipulations of General Early it dwindles to 23,000, and of Mr. Davis to 16,916. The sixteen in this last total is probably an excess. But enough of such trifles.

Page 117. Franklin's Flank Movement *via* West Point.

In the passage touching this matter some correction is required. I allow the inference to be drawn that when Yorktown was evacuated, Franklin was ordered to land up the York River and attack Johnston's army in flank. It appears, however, that in reality he was ordered to land where he did, and send back the transports immediately for more troops. The precise object of Franklin's movement, of what was expected from it, and what resulted from it, will appear from the following extract from a letter from General Franklin to the present writer: "General McClellan did not order me to move into the interior from West Point. On the contrary, after making a landing, I was to await the arrival of Sedgwick's and Fitz John Porter's divisions. When attacked, the morning after my landing was effected, I repulsed the attack, and was joined the same day by Sedgwick, and the day after by Porter. Therefore, the statement that I was held in check by the enemy is hardly correct. My picket line was driven in, but, by repulsing the enemy, was re-established. When I left Yorktown for West Point I think General McClellan anticipated that the enemy would make a heavier stand at Williamsburg, and therefore he intended to concentrate a large turning force where I landed. We certainly were not repulsed in the West Point fight, and that we were held in check by the enemy is not the correct way to put it, because we had no intention to go forward until joined by the troops I have named. I suppose I would have been ordered to advance had not Johnston's main army got past the point where I could have struck him before I was landed."

Page 118. General Sumner at Williamsburg.

Since the date of original publication I have become convinced that in some respects injustice is done to General Sumner in the account of the action at Williamsburg. After the fall of Yorktown, General Sumner received an order to go to the front and take command, without other instructions. He went on with Smith's division, arriving at Williamsburg near night. He found that Stoneman had attacked and failed, but that officer, Stoneman, insisted that it was only a weak line of rifle-pits, and that he had no doubt the enemy had gone. It appeared that General Heintzelman came up in the night with an

order identical with General Sumner's to assume command. General Sumner decided to get the troops up in hand to attack early in the morning. Keys received positive verbal and written orders to have Casey's division there at dawn, but did not get it there till noon, allowing Kearney to pass him on the road. Hooker came up and attacked without orders (from Sumner at least), and the sound of his firing was the first intimation Sumner had of Hooker's movements. Smith could not be withdrawn, but the first troops that came up (Kearney's) *were* sent to Hooker. From these facts it would appear that General Keys was to blame.

While I think this statement due to the memory of General Sumner, there does not appear to be anything to contravene my general verdict "that his conduct of affairs at Williamsburg was marked by great confusion."

General J. E. Johnston says: "At ten o'clock, when the action had lasted more than four hours, there seemed to be so little vigor in the enemy's conduct that I became convinced that it was a mere demonstration intended to delay our march—that the Federal army might pass us by water. As the Federal army, except Franklin's division had marched but nine miles to the field the day before, by two roads, one cannot understand why four or even six divisions, if necessary, were not brought into action. The smallness of the force engaged on this occasion greatly strengthened my suspicion that the army itself was moving up York River in transports."—GEN. J. E. JOHNSTON: "Narrative," pages 120–124.

It was at Williamsburg that General Hooker won the sobriquet "Fighting Joe," but he did so in the foolhardy and unauthorized attack which cost many precious lives.

Pages 186, 187. GENERAL FITZ JOHN PORTER AND GENERAL POPE.

To the Fitz John Porter question, as stated in the foot note to page 186, there has been a long sequel. General Porter began to make efforts for a re-hearing soon after the court-martial. He appealed to President Lincoln in 1863, to President Johnson in 1867, and to President Grant in 1869 and 1874. "My appeals," says General Porter, "were never refused, but were never granted." Finally, in June, 1878, a board was ordered to convene at West Point for the purpose of examining into the case. This board consisted of Generals Schofield, Terry, and Getty. After a "very thorough examination of all the evidence," it, in March, 1879, made a report from which I make the following extracts:

"If the 4.30 order had been promptly delivered, a very grave responsibility would have devolved upon General Porter. The order was based upon conditions which were essentially erroneous, and upon expectations which could not possibly be realized.

"It required an attack upon the enemy's flank or rear, which could not be made, and that the attacking force keep closed on Reynolds, who was far to the right and beyond reach. Yet it would have been too late to correct the error and have the order modified. That order appeared to be part of a general plan. It must be executed promptly or not at all. If Porter had made

not the impossible attack which was ordered, but a direct attack upon the enemy's right wing, would he have been blameless for the fruitless sacrifice of his troops? We believe not. *It is a well-established military maxim that a corps commander is not justifiable in making an apparently hopeless attack in obedience to an order from a superior who is not on the spot, and who is evidently in error in respect to the essential conditions upon which the order is based.* The duty of the corps commander in such a case is to make not a real attack, but a strong demonstration, so as to prevent the enemy in his front from sending reinforcements to other parts of his line.

"This is all that Porter would have been justifiable in doing, even if he had received the 4.30 order at 5 o'clock; and such a demonstration, or even a real attack made after 5 o'clock by Porter alone, could have had no beneficial effect whatever upon the general result. It would not have diminished in the least the resistance offered to the attacks made at other points that afternoon. The display of troops made by Porter earlier in the afternoon had all the desired and all possible beneficial effect. It caused Longstreet's reserve division to be sent to his extreme right in front of Porter's position. There that division remained until about 6 o'clock—too late for it to take any effective part in the operations at other points of the line.

"A powerful and well-sustained attack by the combined forces of Porter's corps and King's division upon the enemy's right wing, if it had been commenced early in the afternoon, might have drawn to that part of the field so large a part of Longstreet's force as to have given Pope some chance of success against Jackson; but an attack by Porter alone could have been but an ineffective blow, destructive only to the force that made it, and, followed by a counter-attack, disastrous to the Union army. *Such an attack, under such circumstances, would have been not only a great blunder, but, on the part of an intelligent officer, it would have been a great crime.*

"What General Porter actually did do, although his situation was by no means free from embarrassment and anxiety at the time, now seems to have been only the simple, necessary action which an intelligent soldier had no choice but to take. *It is not possible that any court-martial could have condemned such conduct if it had been correctly understood. On the contrary, that conduct was obedient, subordinate, faithful, and judicious. It saved the Union army from disaster on the 29th of August.* Fortunately that order did not reach Porter until about sunset—too late for any attack to be made. Any attack which Porter could have made at any time that afternoon must necessarily have been fruitless of any good result. *Porter's faithful, subordinate, and intelligent conduct that afternoon saved the Union army from the defeat which would otherwise have resulted that day from the enemy's more speedy concentration.* The only seriously critical period of that campaign, viz., between 11 A.M. and sunset of August 29th, was thus safely passed. Porter had understood and appreciated the military situation, and, so far as he had acted upon his own judgment, his action had been wise and judicious. For the disaster of the succeeding day he was in no degree responsible. *Whoever else may have been responsible, it did not flow from any action or inaction of his.*

"General Porter was, in effect, condemned for not having taken any part in his own battle. Such was the error upon which General Porter was pronounced guilty of the most shameful crime known among soldiers. *We believe not one among all the gallant soldiers on that bloody field was less deserving of such condemnation than he.* Having thus given the reasons for our conclusions, we have the honor to report, in accordance with the President's order, that, in our opinion, justice requires at his hands such action as may be necessary to annul and set aside the findings and sentence of the court-martial in the case of Major-General Fitz John Porter, and to restore him to the positions of which that sentence deprived him—such restoration to take effect from the date of his dismissal from the service."

The following letter from General Grant to President Arthur will be found interesting in this connection:

NEW YORK, December 22, 1881.

THE PRESIDENT, Washington, D.C.:

Dear Sir—At the request of General Fitz John Porter I have recently reviewed his trial and the testimony furnished before the Schofield court of inquiry, held in 1879, giving to the subject three full days of careful reading and consideration and much thought in the intervening time. The reading of the whole of this record has thoroughly convinced me that, for these nineteen years, I have been doing a gallant and efficient soldier a very great injustice in thought and sometimes in speech. I feel it incumbent upon me now to do whatever lies in my power to remove from him and from his family the stain upon his good name. I feel this the more incumbent upon me than I should if I had been a corps commander only, or occupying any other command in the army than the one which I did; but, as general, I had it possibly in my power to have obtained for him the hearing which he only got at a later day; and, as President, I certainly had the power to have ordered that hearing. In justification for my injustice to General Porter I can only state that, shortly after the war closed, his defence was brought to my attention, but I read it in connection with a sketch of the field where his offences were said to have been committed, which I now see, since perfect maps have been made by the engineers' department of the whole field, were totally incorrect as showing the position of the two armies. I have read it in connection with statements made on the other side against General Porter, and I am afraid, possibly, with some little prejudice in the case, although General Porter was a man whom I personally knew and liked before; but I got the impression, with many others, that there was a half-hearted support of General Pope in his campaigns, and that General Porter, while possibly not more guilty than others, happened to be placed in a position where he could be made responsible for his indifference, and that the punishment was not a severe one for such an offence. I am now convinced that he rendered faithful, efficient, and intelligent service, and the fact that he was retained in command of a corps for months after his offences were said to have been committed is in his favor. What I would ask, in General Porter's behalf, from you is that, if you can possibly give the time,

you give the subject the same study and thought that I have given it, and then act as your judgment may dictate. But, feeling that you will not have the time for such an investigation (for it would take several days' time) I would ask that the whole matter be laid before the attorney-general for his examination and opinion. Hoping that you will be able to do this much for an officer who has suffered for nineteen years a punishment that never should be inflicted upon any but the most guilty, I am very truly yours,

U. S. GRANT.

I may be permitted to remark that when, in 1866, I came into possession of the Confederate official reports, and felt it to be my duty to cite them in evidence (General Porter had then never seen these Reports, nor had I ever seen him), I was most unmercifully berated as a "copperhead" and friend of traitors. But, "the whirligig of time brings in his revenges."

Page 201. LEE'S LOST ORDER.

The following is the text of the order referred to:

SPECIAL ORDERS NO. 191.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA,
September 9, 1862.

The army will resume its march to-morrow, taking the Hagerstown road. General Jackson's command will form the advance, and after passing Middletown, with such portion as he may select, take the route toward Sharpsburg, cross the Potomac at the most convenient point, and by Friday night take possession of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and capture such of the enemy as may be at Martinsburg, and intercept such as may attempt to escape from Harper's Ferry.

General Longstreet's command will pursue the same road as far as Boonsboro, where it will halt with the reserve, supply, and baggage trains of the army.

General McLaws, with his own division and that of General R. H. Anderson, will follow General Longstreet; on reaching Middletown, he will take the route to Harper's Ferry, and by Friday morning possess himself of the Maryland Heights, and endeavor to capture the enemy at Harper's Ferry and vicinity.

General Walker, with his division, after accomplishing the object in which he is now engaged, will cross the Potomac at Cheek's Ford, ascend the right bank to Lovettsville, take possession of Loudoun Heights, if practicable, by Friday morning, Key's Ford on his left and the road between the end of the mountain and the Potomac on his right. He will, as far as practicable, cooperate with General McLaws and General Jackson in intercepting the retreat of the enemy.

General D. H. Hill's division will form the rear-guard of the army, pursuing the road taken by the main body. The reserve artillery, ordnance, and supply trains, etc., will precede General Hill.

General Stuart will detach a squadron of cavalry to accompany the commands of Generals Longstreet, Jackson, and McLaws, and with the main body of the cavalry will cover the route of the army and bring up all stragglers that may have been left behind.

The commands of Generals Jackson, McLaws, and Walker, after accomplishing the objects for which they have been detached, will join the main body of the army at Boonsboro or Hagerstown.

Each regiment on the march will habitually carry its axes in the regimental ordnance wagons, for use of the men at their encampments, to procure wood, etc.

By command of General R. L. Lee.

R. H. CHILTON,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

MAJOR-GENERAL D. H. HILL,
Commanding Division.

It seems that at this time General D. H. Hill's division had not been attached to nor incorporated with either of the two wings of the army of Northern Virginia, so that in addition to the copies sent to corps commanders, one copy of this order was sent to "General D. H. Hill, Commanding Division," directly from Lee's headquarters. General Jackson also sent Hill a copy, regarding Hill as in his command. It was one of these copies that fell into McClellan's hands.

Page 252. HUMPHREYS' CHARGE ON MARYE HEIGHT.

The circumstances of Humphreys' assault deserve fuller mention than I have made, for the charge was marked by a gallantry unsurpassed by anything in the history of the war. General Palfrey, in his admirable monograph on Fredericksburg (in Scribner's "Campaigns of the Civil War" series) says: "Some of the very best fighting that was done at Fredericksburg was done by the Third Division of the Fifth Corps. The division was commanded by General Humphreys, who was probably the best officer in the Army of the Potomac that day. He was a thoroughly educated soldier, possessed of a quick eye and a clear head, and a man of fiery energy. That the fighting his division did was so good was due to him."

I venture to extract from a private letter from General Humphreys to the present writer, dated May 10, 1866, the following particulars, which give an even more vivid picture of his assault than is found in his official report.

"I had just reached the edge of the town facing Marye Heights with my division, when, at the urgent request of General Couch, I was authorized or ordered to support his troops in front of the stone wall, who, he said, were nearly out of ammunition, and would, if not supported, be forced back.

"This was a very great mistake. Had the enemy come out from the stone wall we should have carried the position. I moved forward at once with my division down the hill and across the ditch or canal, formed the leading brigade in the ravine beyond the ditch about three or four hundred yards from the stone wall, and advanced in line of battle to where Couch's men were

lying behind a small fold in the ground about one hundred and fifty yards or less from the stone wall, the existence of which I knew nothing of until I got there. I saw at once that there was nothing to be done but to try the bayonet, which I attempted with this brigade, but could not carry the wall, chiefly because my troops were thrown into disorder by the men lying, several ranks deep, behind the little fold in the ground I have already mentioned. I had ordered my other brigade to form in the same ravine as it came up, and move up to me, and now rode back toward it. It was at this time that I found the artillery Hooker had put on the edge of the ravine, just in the very ground my troops must pass over. I was obliged to go to every gun myself to put a stop to their firing.[1] I then led forward my other brigade, which was thrown into confusion by the masses of men lying down at the place I have already mentioned, the little fold in the ground. I had cautioned my troops about these men, and told them not to mind them, but to run over them. But the brigade was thrown into an unwieldly mass in going over or through them, and the officers and men were mixed up so that the former lost all control of the latter. Notwithstanding this the impetus with which they were moving carried them close up to the wall, the right being actually on it, and the left nearer to the wall than any other troops had reached, when some firing began in the column or mass, which halted and turned slowly back. One minute more and we should have been over the wall, which I am confident I should have carried but for the disorder occasioned by the troops lying down whom I was sent to support. If they had been withdrawn before I moved forward a different result would have followed. I tried to get them up to make them charge with me, but could not stir them. I stopped their firing, however. Every officer of my staff but one was dismounted, and his horse was badly wounded. Four of my staff were wounded. I lost two horses. So near was I to carrying the wall and heights that the enemy were actually moving their guns out of the batteries, and near our right they were beginning to quit the wall. It was getting to be dark when the charge was over. It was when I was returning to lead my last brigade to the charge that I received messages for the first time from General Hooker and from General Butterfield,

[1] The point is a small one, but it would seem that General Humphreys was deceived by General Hooker's report in the matter of the placing of the guns. That admirable officer, the late Colonel C. H. Morgan, then on General Couch's staff, wrote me before his death: "Hooker reported wrongly about those two batteries. Couch sent me down to examine the ground, and afterward I put them in. One was Hazard's, the other Frank's New York."

The same writer adds the following in regard to General Couch's views respecting the point of attack: "During the whole day Couch had been anxious to make an effort on his right, seeing success in front was impracticable. But as fast as he made preparations for this his troops (Howard's) were called to the support of French and Hancock. When Hooker came on the field General Couch went to him and told him that he thought if success was possible it would be by an attack on the right near the Taylor House. Hooker treated Couch with such coldness, not to say contempt, that his sensitive and chivalric nature was deeply touched, and he rode away in silence, going straight to the front, clear up to the little brick house, and farther to the front, I think, than any horseman got that day and returned in safety. I knew his peculiarities well, and believe he was indifferent to a courted death, being stung to the quick by Hooker's apparent contempt of his suggestions."

saying that General Burnside said the heights must be taken before night. I sent them word I had tried the bayonet with one brigade, and was now going to try it with the other. General Hooker and General Butterfield had returned from General Burnside while I was occupied with my leading brigade, and the former mistook the charge of the second brigade for the charge of my division, hence the error of his testimony. I went over the ground on my march to Washington in May of last year, and found that the distances were even less than those I gave in my official report of the part taken in the battle by my division. The first brigade that charged was commanded by Colonel Allabach, the second was commanded by Brigadier-General E. B. Tyler."

Page 273. Hooker's Strategy at Chancellorsville.

From a statement made by General Lee to the writer at Lexington, Va., in 1867, it appears that some deduction must be made from the credit given General Hooker for the "secrecy" of the manœuvres on Chancellorsville. "I see," said General Lee, "that you give General Hooker credit for the secrecy of his operations in crossing the river, and say I 'was surprised.' In most cases this talk of surprises is imaginative. General Stuart was a very vigilant officer, and kept me thoroughly informed of every movement of the Federal forces. But I could not act until Hooker had shown his hand, for I did not know whether his manœuvre was against Fredericksburg or against my communications. When, however, he reached Chancellorsville, I knew exactly the character of the operation, and, making a change of front, I went there and met him."

Page 355. Meade's Alleged Intention to Retreat after the Combat of July 2, 1863.

"When the corps commanders came together that night, there was a unanimous determination to fight it out at Gettysburg—a sentiment which was quite in accord with General Meade's own conviction."

The latter part of this statement is contradicted by Major-General Abner Doubleday, commanding the Third Division of the First Corps at Gettysburg, in a volume entitled "Chancellorsville and Gettysburg," 1882.——

General Doubleday says:

"At night a council of war was held, in which it was unanimously voted to stay and fight it out. Meade was displeased with the result, and, although he acquiesced in the decision, he said angrily, 'Have it your own way, gentlemen, but Gettysburg is no place to fight a battle in.' *There can be no question that at the council referred to General Meade did desire to retreat*" (pages 184, 185).

It is to be supposed that so grave a charge made by a subordinate against his superior officer, and couched in terms so emphatic and unqualified, is sustained by an array of testimony incontestable by its weight and volume.

General Doubleday does not produce one scintilla of testimony in support of his accusation, which, thus unsupported, assumes a very grave character in view of the following emphatic denial by that high-minded soldier, General Meade:

"I utterly deny, under the full solemnity and sanctity of my oath, and in the firm conviction that the day will come when the secrets of all men shall be made known—I utterly deny ever having intended or thought, for one instant, to withdraw that army, unless the military contingencies which the future should develop during the course of the day might render it a matter of necessity that the army should be withdrawn. I base this denial not only upon my own assertion and my own veracity, but I shall also show to the committee, from documentary evidence, the despatches and orders issued by me at different periods during that day, that if I did intend any such operation, I was at the same time doing things totally inconsistent with any such intention." (Report of Committee on Conduct of the War, pages 350 and 436).

General Doubleday was not present at the council of corps commanders (not being a corps commander), and from no corps commander who was present was there ever testimony of aught in substantiation of General Doubleday's accusation. It is accordingly a matter of some curiosity to ascertain on whose authority he ventured to assert that General Meade wanted to retreat after the battle of July 2d. Let us supply this omission by citing the witness, who, though unhonored by mention on the part of General Doubleday, furnishes the sole testimony on which that officer's momentous charge is based. This witness is Major-General Daniel Butterfield, who, during the battle of Gettysburg, served as chief-of-staff to General Meade. Before citing this officer's statement, however, the following fact should be borne in mind. General Butterfield had served as chief-of-staff to General Hooker. When, on June 28th, General Meade assumed command of the Army of the Potomac, he chose as his chief-of-staff that ideal soldier, General A. A. Humphreys, who, however, expressed a wish not to assume the position till after the coming battle. It may well be that General Butterfield was apprised of the fact that he was to give place to General Humphreys, which, in point of fact, he did a few days after the battle.

In his testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, General Butterfield said: "After the council had finished, General Meade arose from the table and remarked that in his opinion Gettysburg was no place to fight a battle; but it was settled to remain there, and the council dispersed."

This, so far as appears, is the slender foundation on which General Doubleday bases the assertion, "There can be no question that at the council referred to General Meade did desire to retreat." [1]

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[1] It will be observed that even Butterfield's statement affords no ground for Doubleday's declaration quoted above, so that his accusation is left naked. It will also be observed by the curious reader that Doubleday's form of representing what Butterfield reported differs significantly from the form of statement actually used by the latter officer. We are told by Doubleday that Meade "said *angrily*," etc., and Butterfield's *oratio obliqua* is converted into a speech with theatrical accessories.

It is to be wished that General Doubleday had made this charge while its subject was still alive.[1]

Pages 358–363. PICKETT'S CHARGE AT GETTYSBURG.

In connection with Pickett's attack, Colonel Taylor, in his "Four Years with General Lee," makes against General Longstreet a serious charge, the gravamen of which is that General Longstreet was instructed by General Lee to support the assault of Pickett (strengthened on his left by Heth's division and two brigades of Pender's) with his two other divisions, those of Hood and McLaws (which constituted his right flank on and near the Emmetsburg road), and that he failed to do so.

Colonel Taylor says (pp. 103–109): "General Lee then" [about 1 P.M., July 3d] "had a conference with General Longstreet, and the mode of attack and the troops to make it were thoroughly debated. I was present, and understood the arrangement to be that General Longstreet should endeavor to force the enemy's lines in his front. That front was held by the divisions of Hood and McLaws. To strengthen him for the undertaking, it was decided to reinforce him by such troops as could be drawn from the centre.

It was designed originally that the two divisions last named, reinforced by Pickett, should make the attack; and it was only because of the apprehensions of General Longstreet that his corps was not strong enough for the movement that General Hill was called on to reinforce him. The assault was to have been made with a column of not less than two divisions, and the remaining divisions were to have been moved forward in support of those in advance. This was the result of the conference alluded to as understood by me. At a given signal the movement began, but the plan agreed on was not carried out. The divisions of Hood and McLaws (First Corps) were passive spectators of the movement. Was it designed to throw these few brigades—originally, at the most, but two divisions—upon the fortified stronghold of the enemy, while, full half a mile away, seven-ninths of the army in breathless suspense, in ardent admiration and fearful anxiety, watched, but moved not? I maintain that such was not the design

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[1] We do not know whether the following extract from General Doubleday's testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War will suggest any animus as entering into his estimate of General Meade's conduct, but it is given for what it is worth.

"*Question.* Can you tell why, after that fight, General Howard and yourself were removed from your command?

"*Answer.* I was removed from the command of the First Corps. General Howard was not removed from command of his corps, but was directed to obey General Hancock, who was his junior, after the first day of the fight.

"*Question.* Why was that?

"*Answer.* I think General Meade thought a couple of scapegoats were necessary; in case the next day's battle turned out unfavorably, he wished to mark his disapprobation of the first day's fight. General Meade is in the habit of violating the organic law of the army to place his personal friends in power. There has always been a great deal of favoritism in the Army of the Potomac. No man who is an anti-slavery man or an anti-McClellan man can expect decent treatment in that army as at present constituted." (Page 311.)

of the commanding general. Had the veteran divisions of Hood and McLaws been moved forward, as was planned, in support of those of Pickett and Pettigrew,[1] not only would the latter division, in all probability, have gained the enemy's works, as did that of Pickett, but these two would have been enabled, with the aid of Hood and McLaws, to resist all efforts of the enemy to dislodge them."

Under date of January 29, 1877, Colonel Taylor wrote to General Longstreet: "In regard to the third day's operations at Gettysburg, according to my recollection, General Lee had a conference with you as to the attack to be made that day, when it was determined that an assault should be made on your front, by your corps, reinforced by Heth's division and two brigades of Pender's. My recollection is distinct in that *all* of your divisions were to take part in the assault, and I never did understand why Hood and McLaws were never ordered forward. Colonel Venable agrees with me entirely in this particular."

To this General Longstreet replied, February 2, 1877: "In reply to your inquiry for a statement in regard to the supposed orders of General Lee in reference to the battle of the third day, I have only to say that General Lee gave no orders for placing the divisions of McLaws and Hood in the column of attack that day."

In a subsequent elaborate review of "Lee in Pennsylvania," in "Annals of the War," General Longstreet adds:

"I may mention here that it has been absurdly said that General Lee ordered me to put Hood's and McLaws' Divisions in support of Pickett's assault. General Lee never ordered any such thing.[2] After our troops were all arranged for assault, General Lee rode with me twice over the lines to see that everything was arranged according to his wishes. He was told that we had been more particular in giving the orders than ever before; that the commanders had been sent for, and the point of attack had been carefully designated, and that the commanders had been directed to communicate to their subordinates, and through them to every soldier in the command, the work that was before them, so that they should nerve themselves for the attack, and fully understand it. After leaving me, he again rode over the field once, if not twice, so that there was really no room for misconstruction or misunderstanding of his wishes. He could not have thought of giving any such an order. Hood and McLaws were confronted by a largely superior force of the enemy on the right of Pickett's attack. To have moved them to Pickett's support would have disengaged treble their number of Federals, who would

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[1] "As they were ordered to do by General Lee, for I heard him give the orders when arranging the fight, and called his attention to it long afterward, when there was discussion about it. He said, 'I know it! I know it!'"—*Colonel C. S. Venable.*

[2] In a foot-note General Longstreet writes: "Colonel Taylor says that General Lee, in his presence, gave me orders to put Hood's and McLaws' Divisions in this column of attack. This I deny, and do not suppose he will claim that any one else 'heard the order.'" It will be observed that General Longstreet overlooks the important corroborative testimony of Colonel Venable, also a member of General Lee's staff.

have swooped down from their rocky fastnesses against the flank of our attacking column, and swept our army from the field. A reference to any of the maps of Gettysburg will show, from the position of the troops, that this would have been the inevitable result. General Lee and myself never had any deliberate conversation about Gettysburg. The subject was never broached by either of us to the other. On one occasion it came up casually, and he said to me (alluding to the charge of Pickett on the 3d), 'General, why didn't you stop all that thing that day?' I replied that I could not, under the circumstances, assume such a responsibility, as no discretion had been left me."

Pages 363–4. Lee's Resolution to Retreat.

The following interesting revelation of General Lee's mood of mind on the night of the third day of the battle is given by General Imboden, to whom General Lee intrusted the duty of transporting the Confederate wounded from Gettysburg back to Virginia.

"When night closed upon the grand scene our army was repulsed. Silence and gloom pervaded our camps. We knew that the day had gone against us, but the extent of the disaster was not known except in high quarters. About eleven o'clock a horseman approached and delivered a message from General Lee, that he wished to see me immediately. On reaching the place indicated, a flickering, solitary candle, visible through the open front of a common tent, showed where Generals Lee and (A. P.) Hill were seated on camp stools, with a county map spread upon their knees, and engaged in a low and earnest conversation. They ceased speaking as I approached, and after the ordinary salutations, General Lee directed me to go to his headquarters and wait for him. He did not return until about one o'clock, when he came riding along at a slow walk and evidently wrapped in profound thought. There was not even a sentinel on duty, and no one of his staff was about. The moon shone full upon his massive features, and revealed an expression of sadness I had never seen upon that fine countenance before, in any of the vicissitudes of the war through which he had passed. I remarked, 'General, this has been a hard day on you.' He looked up and replied mournfully, 'Yes, it has been a sad, sad day for us. We must return to Virginia.'"

Page 376. The Flank March on Centreville.

By General A. A. Humphreys, who was chief of staff of the Army of the Potomac from July, 1863, to November, 1864, I am favored with the following valuable notes on the interesting but complicated manœuvres between Generals Lee and Meade in October, 1863.[1]

"General Meade was contemplating a movement upon Lee by our right. He and myself rode to Cedar Mountain on Friday, October 9th, to have a better look at the country in the direction of a certain pass. We noticed the

[1] The map of Pope's campaign, opposite page 176, shows most of the routes and positions.

smoke of many camp fires about Madison Court House. We knew that a movement of some kind was intended by General Lee, for a signal message of the enemy to General Fitz Hugh Lee had been read, directing him to draw three days' hard bread. 'Hard bread' with Lee meant movement. We took it to be a cavalry operation. We had not been long on the mountain when information came from the Sixth Corps pickets tending to show that at least some infantry was in motion, and before we left the mountain columns of infantry as well as cavalry were across the upper Rapidan. Our cavalry was thrown forward to ascertain the character of the movement. These, toward Madison Court House, were supported by a division of infantry, but it was not until Saturday evening, the 10th, that the true character of the movement disclosed itself. Lee was, in our judgment, moving to Warrenton. A large part of Lee's infantry was at that time on and across Hazel River, in the vicinity of Turkey Hole Mountain. At that time the First, Fifth, and Sixth Corps were near the Rapidan, the Third Corps was near Culpepper Court House, and the Second Corps on Mountain Run (or Creek) not far from Stevensburg. Lee was as near to Warrenton as we were, perhaps nearer. The Warrenton pike and the railroad formed our line of communication with Washington. There were no parallel roads from the vicinity of Culpepper by which the army could be moved and strike Lee in flank in the continuation of his movement on Warrenton. There was but one road leading that way, and had we attempted to move by that we should have found ourselves in the rear, and pretty well in the rear of Lee.

"It was decided at once to move to Warrenton, and from that point move forward to attack Lee, or force him to attack us. The orders were issued at once, and the movement began. By Sunday afternoon the army was across the Rappahannock *en route* to Warrenton. Gregg was sent up the Rappahannock on Sunday toward Jefferson and Amissville across the roads Lee must take to Warrenton, with orders to send the earliest intelligence of Lee to headquarters. So important did I deem it that Gregg should understand that it was *information* of Lee's movements solely that he was after, that toward sunset I sent a staff officer to him with a despatch to that effect, enjoining upon him the importance of the earliest information of the enemy. The staff officer returned in the night, having delivered the despatch.

"Our cavalry under General Pleasonton had an affair with the enemy's cavalry near Culpepper Court House in the course of Sunday, but no infantry appeared there. From General Pleasonton's information and conversation General Meade derived the impression that Lee had been probably moving on Culpepper Court House to fight us, instead of on Warrenton to get on our line of communication, and force us to fight him on ground of his own choosing. My conviction remained the same as it had been the night before. In this state of uncertainty the movement of the troops to Warrenton the next morning was suspended. Twelve o'clock of Monday the 12th passed, and not a sound of shot in any direction had been heard nor one word from Gregg had been received.

"It was at this time, between twelve and one o'clock of Monday, October

12th, that General Meade finally decided to send the Fifth, Sixth, and Second Corps back toward or to Culpepper Court House in search of the enemy. As they advanced toward it our cavalry had some skirmishing with that of the enemy, and some cannon shot were fired by them. The town was reached about sunset, but Lee's army was not there. Not a sound of any kind had been heard by us during Monday from the direction of Gregg, nor had one word of information been received from him or any one else concerning Lee's army.

"Near ten o'clock at night I received a despatch from General Gregg, stating that about noon he had encountered Lee's army near the Rappahannock moving toward Warrenton; that after a severe contest he had been driven across the Rappahannock, and was then at Fayetteville; that Lee's army had been crossing the river for several hours. Soon after this the pickets of the Third Corps, the farthest up the river, began to be driven in by the enemy, who was between us and Warrenton, and within a few miles of that town. General Gregg stated verbally to me, at a subsequent day, that he had sent several messages to headquarters. None were received, nor was any explanation made as to the cause of failure in his messengers to reach us. There must have been a heavy cannonading going on about six miles from us, yet we did not hear a sound. Forty guns, according to Gregg, were at one time at work.

"The army was at once got in motion, and by Tuesday evening the right of the Third Corps was at Greenwich, the Second Corps at Auburn, the Fifth Corps at Catlett's, the Sixth Corps on the railroad between Catlett's and Bristoe, and the First Corps near Bristoe.

"To determine what should next be done was the subject of long examination and discussion by General Meade and myself. The area between Broad Run, Cedar Run, the Warrenton Pike, and the railroad, was almost unknown to us. So far as we knew the ground occupied by both armies, the advantage of ground was all with the enemy. We could not fight on the pike and railroad both, without subjecting the army to being overpowered on one or the other flank, and if we did *not* hold these two roads and the intermediate ground, we should be turned. We knew of no roads by which reserves or other disposable troops could be transferred rapidly from one point to the other. It was concluded that the disadvantages of any position in the area mentioned were too great to admit of its being adopted.

"The next position was beyond Broad Run, the right near Groveton, the left near Manassas Junction. It was *probable* we could get into position here before the enemy could get on the ground. But we should have fought on the old battlefield of Bull Run. That of itself was a grave objection to taking up the position. We could without doubt take up the position of Centreville, and for that the order was issued at a late hour of the night. General Sykes with the Fifth Corps was across Broad Run at twelve o'clock on the 14th, when General Meade and myself reached Bristol. He crossed above the bridge. The Second Corps was to cross below. The general order for the movement required the corps commanders to keep up constant communication with the corps in front and rear of them, and mutually support each other. General

Sykes was now directed not to move until the Second Corps came up, and orders were sent forward to the Third Corps (in front or advance of the Fifth), near Manassas Junction, to halt until the Fifth Corps began to move again. It was expected that some force of the enemy would make its appearance at Bristoe, coming from Greenwich, on the road the Third Corps had taken.

"When it was found Lee would not come forward to Centreville, and after the army had one day's rest, orders were prepared for the forward movement, but one of those heavy autumn rain-storms set in that flooded Bull Run so that it was impassable, and our pontoon train had moved with the rest of the trains to Fairfax Station, and the roads were blocked with trains coming forward to the troops with supplies. Thus Lee had time to break up the railroad between Bristoe and Warrenton Junction. That rain was one of Fortune's favors to him."

Page 608. THE QUESTION OF LEE'S SUPPLIES AT AMELIA COURT HOUSE.

It will be seen that in the text weighty results are attributed to the failure of General Lee to receive large supplies of commissary and quartermaster's stores, which it is alleged he had ordered to be forwarded to Amelia Court House. But from the statements of Mr. Davis it would appear that I was misled by erroneous reports as to this matter. Mr. Davis quotes from General I. M. St. John, Commissary-General of the Confederate Army, as follows: "No calls, by letter or requisition, from the General commanding, or from any other source, official or unofficial, had been received either by the Commissary-General or the Assistant Commissary-General; nor (as will be seen by the appended letter of the Secretary of War) was any communication transmitted through the department channels to the Bureau of Subsistence for the collection of supplies at Amelia Court House." Mr. Davis also quotes General John C. Breckenridge's letter to General St. John, as follows: "I have no recollection of any communication from General Lee in regard to accumulation of rations at Amelia Court House. The second or third day after the evacuation [of Richmond], I recollect you said to General Lee in my presence that you had a large number of rations (I think eighty thousand) at a convenient point on the railroad, and desired to know where you should place them. The General replied that the military situation made it impossible to answer."

Mr. Davis makes citations from several other Confederate officials to the effect that no order to forward supplies to Amelia Court House was ever made, or that, if made, it was never received; but fully admits that the absence of such supplies was a severe blow to the Confederate forces. "At Amelia Court House Ewell's corps made a junction with Lee's army, but forced marches with men, most of whom were untrained by previous campaigns, had greatly reduced the number of Ewell's command, and the want of rations now was impairing their efficiency" ("Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government," Vol. II., page 663).

Page 614. Closing Scenes.

Mr. Davis makes the following interesting statement in regard to the views of General Lee previous to the surrender: "Lee had never contemplated surrender. He had, long before, in language similar to that employed by Washington during the Revolution, expressed to me the belief that in the mountains of Virginia he could carry on the war for twenty years, and, in directing his march toward Lynchburg, it may well be that, as an alternative, he hoped to reach those mountains, and, with the advantage which the topography would give, yet to baffle the hosts which were following him. On the evening of the 8th General Lee decided, after conference with his corps commanders, that he would advance the next morning beyond Appomattox Court House, and, if the force reported to be there should prove to be only Sheridan's cavalry, to disperse it and continue the march toward Lynchburg; but, if infantry should be found in large force, the attempt to break through it was not to be made, and the correspondence which General Grant had initiated on the previous day should be reopened by a flag, with propositions for an interview to arrange the terms of capitulation. Gordon, whose corps formed the rear-guard from Petersburg, and who had fought daily for the protection of the trains, had now been transferred to the front. On the next morning, before daylight, Lee sent Colonel Venable, one of his staff, to Gordon, commanding the advance, to learn his opinion as to the chances of a successful attack, to which Gordon replied, 'My old corps is reduced to a frazzle, and, unless I am supported by Longstreet heavily, I do not think we can do anything more.' When Colonel Venable returned with this answer to General Lee, he said, 'Then there is nothing left me but to go and see General Grant'" ("Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government," Vol. II., pp. 656, 657).

The following additional particulars are given by Colonel Taylor, of General Lee's staff:

"The returns from the various commanders made that morning showed an aggregate of eight thousand muskets in line of battle.

"On the previous evening I became separated from General Lee in the execution of his orders, and did not rejoin him until the morning of the 9th. After making my report the General said to me, 'Well, Colonel, what are we to do?' In reply a fear was expressed that it would be necessary to abandon the trains, which had already occasioned us such great embarrassment; and the hope was indulged that, relieved of this burden, the army could make good its escape. 'Yes,' said the General, 'perhaps we could; but I have had a conference with these gentlemen around me, and they agree that the time has come for capitulation.'

"'Well, sir,' I said, 'I can only speak for myself; to me any other fate is preferable.'

"'Such is my individual way of thinking,' interrupted the General. 'But,' I immediately added, 'of course General, it is different with you. You have to think of these brave men, and decide not only for yourself, but for them.'

'Yes,' he replied, 'it would be useless and therefore cruel to provoke further effusion of blood, and I have agreed to meet General Grant with a view to surrender'" ("Four Years with General Lee," pages 151, 152).

The narrative of events is thus continued by Mr. Davis:

"General Grant, in response to a communication under a white flag made by General Lee, came to Appomattox, where a suitable room was procured for their conference, and, the two Generals being seated at a small table, General Lee opened the interview thus: 'General, I deem it due to proper candor and frankness to say at the very beginning of this interview that I am not willing even to discuss any terms of surrender inconsistent with the honor of my army, which I am determined to maintain to the last.' General Grant replied: 'I have no idea of proposing dishonorable terms, General, but I would be glad if you would state what you consider honorable terms.' General Lee then briefly stated the terms upon which he would be willing to surrender. Grant expressed himself as satisfied with them, and Lee requested that he would formally reduce the propositions to writing" ("Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government," Vol. II., pages 658, 659).

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